

Chapter 6: Geb; The World of Magic

The next week passed so quickly for both Will and Julia. Julia invited Will to join her at school for the time he was free, which was almost everyday. There were times however when Will felt drawn back to the park where he had first arrived after his "jump"

It was odd. Will felt calm within Earth's Arcana everywhere he went, yet, the site of his arrival now rippled with an arcana wave. Will was fearful it would affect Earth's ambient Arcana, but the wave continued to grow weaker as the days passed. He surmised that Earth's arcana was dissipating the wave of it's own accord.

Will really started enjoying Julia's school, especially the library. He would spend sometimes the entire day reading and compiling all the information he could find about various Earth topics. It was nice to have written records again and, although there was obvious personal bias from each author, the ideas as a whole were mostly uncensored. On Will's Grey World, the libraries reflected the single right way to think about everything. At his heart, Will always enjoyed studying and it was liberating to be able to do so without suspicious people looking over his shoulder.

Julia was having a lot of fun picking Will's brain about his own world. Once she had gotten over the shock of disbelief, listening to stories about a whole other group of humans was like taking a little adventure away from her boring life. His details of "Myrah" always seemed a bit dreary, but it also explained a lot about Will's own personality.

Why he was so prone to paranoia, the panic attacks, the entire society of Myrah was a classic case of a lopsided oligarchy. The 'secret police' and restraints on citizens. No wonder Will was so high strung around most people.

However as time passed, Will was starting to get used to the regular flow of life on Earth. The second week of life in the guest house was just as busy as the first for Will, but by now he was starting to get into his own routines. He was usually awake early in the morning for his walk.

After that, he would often head to Julia's school for reading or attend various symposiums as a guest.

In the afternoon, lunch with Julia, and then a run down of the days classes. To Will, medical sciences were something even the non-magic elites on his world were restricted in using. The 'elites' feared the power of science at all times. It was the one possible way of upsetting the established order.

The more Julia explained the sciences to Will, the more he could understand why the elites were afraid. Science was so logical, easy to explain, and comprehend. The clarity of the logic as refreshing. For much of his life, Will had been expected to practice incantations by rote with no explanations. It was rhetoric but without the higher purpose of politics. It was for the function of either military application via secret police or maintenance of the various machines run and operated by the magical elites.

Logic as even starting to work it's way into Will's understanding of Arcana. He tried to work through the sources of it's power. Where did Arcana come from? What were the various sources that produced it? Were there limits to it's power or was it like a person's mind and able to be expanded with practice?

Will already knew there were physical limitations to his own use of Arcana. He felt it both times he

'jumped'. That limitation was obvious. Moving his body from one world to another was absolutely pushing the limits of his Arcana. But was that a limitation of himself or of the magic itself? Or maybe it was the stone?

None of this could have been possible without the stone's own peculiar powers. It was common for mages throughout time to imbue a part of themselves into inanimate objects to help future mages channel or amplify certain magics. As Will continued to dig deeper into the logical arts of science, he could feel something else starting to grow restless inside of him.

After 3 weeks of his various trips to the site of his arrival and the college's vast library, Will was feeling the pull of the stone again. It seemed to coincide with his own desire to delve deeper into the stone's origin. There were unanswered questions that were bothering him. Will sat down one afternoon and talked to Julia about this feeling.

"I guess that's where all your studying is taking you." Julia said calmly, but with just a touch of sadness. She had really enjoyed getting to know Will. She would miss these conversations and this unique connection. He had a type of perspective that was so different, like being able to ask a question from inside the problem. (editors note: describe here what its like talking with your twin)

"How will you manage your next jump? Do you even know where you'll be going?" Julia asked with concern. She thought he was rushing into this. He could arrive anywhere on any world and some were sure to be a lot more hostile than here on Earth. He looked so weak when he first arrived here.

"Well, I was thinking about heading to a place where I could get more advice about this stone... Geb."

"What or where is Geb?" Julia asked. This was the first time Will had mentioned a concrete destination. "I haven't been there before, but I've heard of it. Supposedly it's a world like mine filled with magic."

Will gave Julia what few details he had learned from his time on Myst conversing with Hiram. "So there are worlds with magic out there? Places like Myrah?" That soon had Julia wondering about this entire expedition. It caught her interest. She had never been out of her own country, much less off her planet. Still, there was one major nagging thought...

"Will, can you really use magic? Just something small. I've been going along with you this whole time believing you can actually use magic. I want to see it myself." Will felt put on the spot, but he had gotten to know Julia quite a bit over the past few weeks and decided this was safe.

Will took a deep breath and relaxed his mind and body. It had been a while since he had used Arcana, probably at least since his arrival on Earth. He closed his eyes and reached out into Earth's arcana. It was a different feeling than Myrah's arcana; cleaner and less cluttered by so many other mages reaching in at once.

The energy flowed as he took his second breath. As he breathed out, Will directed the energy to the palm of his right hand. Will wanted to keep it small and simple so he just let it click, snap, hiss into his lightning spell.

The quick shift from Arcana energy into a physical form of energy took less than half a second. Julia was surprised, shocked. In Will's hand was a small, softly glowing orb of blue pale lightning. It was beautiful in it's simplicity. Julia shifted to the left, then to the right looking for string, wires, or sight of a trick...

nothing though.

"Believe me now?" Will smiled. It was kind of nice to show off a bit. He knew it was hard for her to believe just words, from a stranger no less. Julia was mesmerized for a while before asking to hold it.

"Put your hands out. I don't know if this will work." Will explained, "usually magi are forbidden to show Arcana to non-magic users, much less let them try to touch Arcana."

Julia was both excited and afraid of what might happen. "Well, either you'll get burned or it'll hover just above your hand. Try to calm your mind. Relax. Take deep breaths." She was trying to, but part of her logical mind was struggling with the entire situation.

"Ok, here it goes. On three. One. Two. Three." Will dropped the tiny, glowing orb into Julia's hand. At first it just hung for a moment as Julia felt the warm tingle of the orb in her left palm before it started to dissipate. "Hmm. Didn't quite expect that." Will said calmly. "Strange."

"Wow. That's a gnarly sensation. Kind of like... holding an electric fence. You feel a tingling or a numbing." Julia said in a rapid and thrilled way. "I guess magic is real."

It made Julia wonder about a dozen different things. If she could somehow learn magic from Will, maybe she could pick up a few tricks during this adventure. It wouldn't be too long, would it? She still had another 8 weeks until the end of the semester. Would she need to pack clothes?

Will could guess from the silence that Julia was deep in thought. He knew by now how Julia's various moods shifted. In a lot of ways she mirrored his own peculiarities. The same fixed stare when lost in thought. That feeling of being a bit out of one's body when you really latch onto a thought.

"You're not seriously thinking about following me on my trip, are you?" Will asked. Julia snapped back into reality just as he finished his sentence. "No, no, maybe..." Julia was a bit embarrassed. She had been found out so quickly. "That, it would be such an experience. I can only just imagine it."

"Some places...maybe most places... are not as comfortable as Earth. Myrah maybe habitable, but it's not very nice. Smog, nasty grey streets and buildings, and the gloom... It drains the life from you. And that's just the environment! You've also got political backstabbing, secret police, etc..." Will didn't want to sound like a total buzz-kill, but he knew if there were places like Earth, then there was a chance there'd be places like Myrah.

The rest of the day was relatively quiet. Julia was torn between a desire for safety and adventure. She and Will spent the rest of the day walking around campus and discussing his eventual departure.

It was really odd. Both of them had grown so used to the other, but in a different way. It wasn't the cliché sort of connection you see in a romance. It was a very hard to pin down actually.

Julia had a feeling it was something different. Love, but of a different form. It left them both feeling odd at times. Close but separate.

Will felt it also. Except from a magic user's perspective. There were times he could swear that he felt a resonance with Julia. As if the arcana that surrounded her was identical to his own. A mirror image in so many ways.

Will decided to make his next 'jump' in 2 days. He had learned what he could on Earth but something in his subconscious was prodding him forward.

The more he thought of Geb, it seemed to be the next logical choice. Maybe something on Geb would help him to understand.

Ever since he'd first left Myrah, he felt a small nagging at the back of his mind. He hated it, his home world, but there was something that felt 'off'. Something about it's familiarity. Home was home, even if you despised it.

At first his adventure had been to simply get away from his world. Now, he'd met the girl in his dreams, but there was still something not complete. He wanted to know more. More about the stone. More about Arcana on other worlds.

The night before he had planned to leave Earth he had a strange and powerful vision. He could see Geb. It was almost like Myst. The arcana of millions of beings. A world of untamed magic.

As his vision brought him closer he felt a force trying to repel him. It was strong, very strong. Almost frightening. It's aura was one of indescribable terror. Will tries to simply avoid getting closer but it blocked his path. It was 'on' Geb. Something powerful and terrifying.

The next morning, Will was ready. He double checked his gear, his staff, the stone, which he now had put into a small leather pouch. He'd told Julia he was heading out that afternoon, but he was afraid she might do something foolish.

He felt bad about lying to Julia. He told himself he didnt want her to get hurt (which was true), but the real truth was their closeness terrified him. Her latent arcana mirroring his was 'blinding' to his senses and he needed to be completely focused on his journey. If she was too close (even just to watch), she might get pulled into the 'Jump' or dragged into space. There was no way to tell in this experiment and it wasn't worth the risk.

Will slipped out of the guest house quietly. It had been comfortable, a nice bed and a change of clothes. Such kindness. the twinge stuck in his stomach as he slowly closed the door, making sure it was locked. He was not coming back.

The streets were silent . The sun was just starting to rise. Will was torn between his desire to go, to set forth, and to be with Julia on Earth. The sun was a pale orange as it started to crest the horizon. Beautiful but full of sadness.

Finally, Will reached the point where he'd first arrived on Earth, the park. It was a very solemn feeling Will had as he slowly walked into the park. The stillness of Earth's arcana was calming, he would miss that peace. It was the first place Will could honestly feel a sense of complete internal tranquility.

As he walked through the park, one last time, Will took a long, hard look at his surroundings. It would be the last time, perhaps. The trees had turned in the bright colors of fall. It was still a bit chilly due to the autumn season. Though Myrah had its seasons, they all seemed so hollow.

Summers were cloudy and grey, Fall was grey and misty or cloudy, Winters were cold and dark. Even spring barely tried to fight the permanent dirge of hopelessness. He would miss Earth.

Will looked for a spot that best focused the arcane energies into the park.

Usually the precise center was preferred, but it could also depend on the lay of the environment. Higher ground was always more potent than sinking lands.

He felt the spot he was standing and breathed deep. The arcane energies were flowing into him and he started concentrating on where he would go next. Such a pure source of magic, Will could see this would probably work.

At his second breath he felt something. A tremor, or vibration. Something reflecting his arcana back. A disturbance? On Earth?

"Will!!!" Julia came running from the entrance of the park. He stuttered, but he had already taken a third and fourth breath.

The confluence of the 'Jump' was already channeling through Will. But instead of staying directed through him it started to branch through Julia as well. The stone started to shake and kick in Will's pouch. The Arcane energies flowing through Will splintered out to Julia as they began to connect.

The influx in energies between Will and Julia pulled them both into the 'Jump', and in a quick 'pop', both were pulled into the 'Jump'.

Julia and Will were surrounded by the blinding light of the 'Jump'. The arcane forces were straining, pulling, and squeezing them in various directions. The rush of time and space were leading Will and Julia deep into the reaches of the beyond.

Being Will's third 'Jump' he could feel and process things more clearly than before. The stone was pulling them both, but Will could feel that it was in some small way, under his direction.

Julia on the other hand couldn't tell what was happening. It was all happening so fast. So much passing so quickly. She could recall riding roller coasters as a child, but this was tantamount to being sucked into a jet engine, yet without all the noise and turbulence.

Somewhere in the back of her conscience mind she could feel a tiny thread of energy. Tethering her to Will- Just a speck of light, but enough for her to stay focused on. A center of gravity in the flurry of chaotic space.

There was no way to be sure the directions or pace, but Will had a feeling he knew where they were going. In the maddening flashes of energy, he could feel them closing in on a very strong Arcana source. It felt familiar. The living, breathing, writhing energies of an Arcane world.

As they closed in Will could feel a force resisting them. It was cold, ancient. Something older than any human. A rush of fear or something of that nature washed over Will. He felt a stranger probing influence enter his mind. It was trying to 'read' Will from the world below.

Will was being pulled toward the world by its energy source, but also being repelled by something on the world. Something very powerful. The dual stresses of the jump and this 'thing' were too much and Will started to black-out. Julia was unable to see the thread of energy anymore, and started to panic.

The 'jump' ended abruptly as both entered into the world below.

Julia woke first. The first thing she noticed was the lack of buildings. In fact, there were no buildings or any thing resembling civilization.

“Well, I guess we're not in Kansas anymore.” Julia said to herself.

She quickly looked around for Will, but he was not immediately visible. She was starting to get a little antsy. Will had brought her here, but there was no trace of Will in the vicinity.

“Will!”

Will was suffering from the same headache as last time he jumped, maybe worse. Probably the strain of two people on the jump. Then he remembered Julia.

While Earth had been free of Arcane interference, this world was a buzz with too much magical twittering. It was a constant 'snick', 'snack', 'crick'-ing that bugged him. “Definitely not Earth.”

.... “Will!” ..

He heard Julia calling and tried to call back, but his voice stopped half way. “Ju”..! The magical back lash of the 'Jump' was excruciating. His lungs rasped for air, but the pain was unrelenting.

Thankfully Julia didn't sound too far away. If he could just take a few deep breaths, he might be able to make a clear call back.

As Will lay on the ground he thought about where he was, now. It wasn't Earth, too much Arcana activity. Not Myrah, the sky was clear. Not Mist either, though very similar. It was like this world was Mists twin. There was a subtle difference in the 'feel' of the energies. Kind of 'rough' or gravelly. A world with a lot of activity and age.

Will took a calming breath and tried to get a grasp for the magics of the world, but the headache continued to persist.

He could feel the pain die away bit-by-bit. He tried to block out the splitting pain sensation long enough to fully breath in. The flow of magic felt refreshing, cutting down the harsh buzz of the 'Jump's feed back.

It felt a lot like Mist, but so much older. The Arcana of the world was far more 'handled' if he had to pick a word.

It was Arcana that had flowed through countless millions before and would continue to fuel those that lived on the current world. While Mist's Arcana was pure, and vibrant, this world felt a bit more worn and tired. Though, no where near the burned out vestiges of Myrah.

“Julia!” Will was still lying on his back, but at least he had the energy to call out.

Julia snapped to attention as she heard her name called out. It came from somewhere to the left, through the trees a ways and over a hill. Just a quick glance could tell Julia that she was along an overgrown path of some sort. It appeared to have wheel tracks, but they had been hidden by the tall grasses now growing along the route.

Along the path were trees, just starting to bloom. They were a strange color, not like her home world. The

trees themselves were trees, like Earth's, but something was different. The bark had different grains and obtrusion. The branches, different angles and colors.

She decided to take that first jump and pushed into the tree works to find Will. 'If this world has Magic' she thought, 'Best to have a magician, just in case.' The trees were openly spaced, so she was able to move between them easily.

The hill dropped a ways before resting in a low, shallow ravine. And there was Will, lying flat on his back. He looked hurt.

"Will! Are you okay?" Will was so glad to see Julia had come out of the 'Jump' unhurt. 'At least someone is okay.' Will thought and tried to grin.

"Whats wrong, Will?" Julia switched into care taker mode once again. Will looked okay, but internal injuries were very deceptive. The exterior covered them well.

"Mostly this splitting headache. Always an after effect of the 'Jump'." Will said, still fighting the pangs of Arcane over-exertion.

"Nothing broken?" Julia wanted to make sure Will could walk. Nothing worse than trying to walk on something broken.

Julia checked Will's pulse and did a quick visual check. He seemed okay.

"Do you think you can stand?" - J

"Guess we're going to find out" - W.

Will sat up first. The pain shocked through every major part of his body. "Ow! Guess I need a breather." Will laid back down as Julia took a seat by his side.

"Is the 'Jump' always like this?" Julia asked. "You mean debilitating? Yes." Will felt the sting of the arcana drain still puncturing his body.

Julia decided to leave it at that. 'A patient in pain doesn't feel the desire to be cheerful usually' Julia thought.

"Arcana drain,... 'Jumping' as one person is tough enough, I had no idea two would feel like this. I'm surprised we made it at all." Will was surprised they had survived a merged 'Jump'.

"How long do you think it'll take before you can stand?" Julia wanted a general prognosis of the situation.

"Hmmm,... probably a few hours. The first time I jumped I passed out for who knows how long. By Second 'Jump' I was only out maybe an hour or less. However, both times it was just me. Two people, forget about it."

Will was feeling better just having someone to talk with. He hadn't expected Julia to sneak out early to see him off, much less getting sucked into the 'Jump' and pulled along for the trip. But he felt better.

"Where do you think we are Will? Still on Earth? Kind of looks like some distant place." Julia didn't quite

want to accept that she'd just been bolted across the known universe in what might have been mere seconds.

“We're not on Earth, that's for certain. Arcana feels different. I'm pretty sure I know where we are.”

Will had thought about his talks with Hiram and it seemed a logical assumption now. “I'm fairly certain this is Geb. A world of magic. A wild world, and we'd better be ready for the worst. This place can be unpredictable.”

Continue to [Chapter_7...](#)

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