

# Chapter - 8 - GEB - The Ruins and Sacred Beasts

Will woke up feeling very refreshed, almost as if the day before there had been no 'jump'. He took a long deep breath, drawing in the various energies of Ged. 'It felt so much like mist, Will thought, 'only more wild and untamed.' Turning, he noticed Jack had already left for his morning scouting. Will wished Jack had at least offered to take him along, there was so much to see.

Taking off his covers he noticed a slight chill and quickly changed into his clothes. He'd need a new outfit; the jeans he'd worn from Earth were in need of a good cleaning. It would also be nice to see what other options he'd have for clothes on Ged.

Walking down the stairs into the main eating hall, he saw that Kadde was sitting enjoying a few nuts and a hot drink. Kadde was glad to see Will up so early, there was still so much to discuss.

"Come have a seat Will," Kadde called to Will as he left the stairs. "Certainly." Will took a seat across from Kadde and looked around for a bite to eat.

"Hungry Will? I can ask for a menu if you wish."

Once settled, Will decided he just felt like toast and tea.

"Ah, if only I could enjoy tea like you. However, the beak does prevent sipping, sadly."

"What are you drinking?" Will thought Kadde was already drinking tea. "Tea. Like I said, I can't quite enjoy it like you." It made Will wonder what other things he might be taking for granted. "No worry, no worry, Will. Tea is still tea." Kadde said as he carefully picked up his drink in his clawed hand and carefully poured some into his beaked mouth.

Will had some of his toast. It was very unlike Earth's or Myrah's bread. On Myrah, he remembered it was a bit gritty and sour from the type of yeast they used. Earth's was softer, finer, but very sweet. This bread was kind of chewy and rough, more like a toasted biscuit. A second bite and he noticed that it had small seeds that had a slightly buttery taste. It was kind of a simple earthy tone, very nice.

"I'm sorry if I speak so much. It's just that I've never met anyone from another world, much less two people from two different worlds. It simply rattles my mind." Kadde said excitedly as he cracked open a nut in his beak with a sharp 'crack'!

"Aren't there other worlds beyond Mist, and Durat that you know of?" Will said as he started on a second slice of toast. "Certainly. Many thousands actually. However, traveling to another world is beyond this world's magic so far. Maybe one day... Anyway, we have plenty to do today; Re-equipping, re-stocking, and probably seeing where we are on the roads."

Will was glad Kadde wasn't pressing the point of other worlds. He secretly didn't want people to know he had something that assisted his jumps. He worried that if he lost the stone, he'd be stuck forever on a world.

Kadde cracked open another nut and started flipping through the pages of a small leather book. Will glanced at the various notes Kadde had taken. There were several small maps marked with strange red and blue symbols.

“There is always so much to think about on these expeditions. Routes, supplies, cost of assistants, oh... the list goes on.” Kadde lamented.

“So where are you headed? What is your team looking for?” Will asked as he finally had some of the tea. It was a bit hot, but not bad. Will had never had much taste for tea, it all seemed to taste the same to him.

“I found some new information a while back, and it's been a dream of mine to learn more about Ged's 'World Clock'. I mean, I've seen the clock and all, but I want to find more about its origins.” Kadde explained.

“What is the 'World Clock'?” Will asked. He had another piece of toast and settled into his chair a bit. “The clock itself is a marvel of ancient engineering. It keeps track of the hours, days, weeks, months, and years of its entire operating life. It tells time, obviously, but it also records all the arcanic activity of Ged. “Truly amazing!” Kadde said excitedly. “I've always wanted to know more about how it was made. Who made it? and Why?”

After a little while Miila and Julia came down stairs and joined Kadde and Will. “I take it 'Vul' will be digesting today?” Miila asked 'matter-of-factly'

“Of course. He is our porter and strongest member. I couldn't make half the progress I wanted if I didn't have his size and battle prowess.” Kadde answered as he motioned for 2 more menus.

“Hey Will, feeling better?” Julia asked with concern. She knew, that for better or worse, she needed Will to help get her back to Earth. “Yeah. Much better. You?”

“Still getting used to the whole 'another world' shock, but otherwise not bad.” Julia said nervously. “Oh, you'll be fine. Just act like yourself and you'll be okay. With so many different cultures and peoples on Ged, most don't mind the everyday weirdness.” Miila said as she stretched out and looked for something meaty on the menu.

After a nice conversive breakfast the group finally got down to the day's business. “It'll be 3 days before Vulgurutt is up for the next leg of the journey.

So, while we're here we need to prepare you two for the road, that is if you'll be coming.” Kadde said, glancing back and forth between Will and Julia. Julia's stomach felt a bit knotted up, she wasn't sure she'd like spending the next several days on the road. She was worrying how far behind she would be on her assignments for class and the possible test dates she'd miss.

Will finally spoke up and mentioned the need for more appropriate attire. “Of course. You'll need equipment for the road, as well as some type of weapons.” Kadde said. Julia's heart sunk at the mention of weapons. She'd spent the past several years studying medicine, and now there was the prospect that she may have to inflict harm on another living thing.

“Will, you are a magic user - are you not?” Kadde asked point blank. “Oh, Yeah. I have some training.”

Will answered. "Hmm," Kadde turned to Julia, but felt uncertain of her skills. "Julia, what are your talents?" Kadde asked.

"Umm, well, I'm not really the talented type, I guess." Julia wasn't sure what 'talents' she had. She'd spent so many years in school she'd never really taken the time to hone skills beyond the academic.

"I can do first aid or medical care." Julia was at least confident about her abilities in caring for others.

"I guess a healer then? Usually that's my area of expertise, but it would be nice for some more hands-on assistance." Kadde was a bit uncertain about Julia's ability to hold up under the rigors of the road once things got moving.

With breakfast finished they set out into the village to find what they would need for supplies. In the mid-day light the village was larger than they had originally expected. There was a black smith, at least 2 tailors, and a market for all the essentials.

Miila took Julia to the tailor for a fitting and something more 'functional' as she explained the rigors of travel. "You see," Miila explained as Julia was being measured by an Avian-humanoid, she looked similar to Kadde, but had a softer grey and brown feather pattern.

"Most of us adventurer/traveler types have heavier clothing than say your average villagers. It's a 'rough' world out there with creatures and such that would love to take a bite out of your pink, fleshy torso. It pays to have some level of protection. I wear padded leather, as well as protection on my extremities, since I like to get up and personal in the fray."

Julia tried not to feel nervous as the Avian tailor finished the measurements.

"Which material do you want; leather, scale, chain-mail, or simple cloth?" The tailor asked as she turned to her stock room. "Probably a cloth/leather mesh. Easier for wear." Miila said. With that the tailor started to work and Miila took Julia out around the village.

"So what do you plan to do, you know, after you're done adventuring and stuff?" Julia was feeling better after a simple lunch of fruit and bread to chat with Miila about other things.

"Sometimes I don't know for sure. Somedays I feel like I want to do this until I can't go anymore. Other times I want to save enough to settle down with a nice mate and raise a few children. I don't know. I'm only 25, I still have several good years left I guess." Miila said in a slightly more dreamy voice. "How about you, Julia? Big plans? Settling down?"

Now that she'd heard Miila open up about her thoughts, Julia was kind of lost. All her adult life had been one single goal after another; graduate high school with honors, get into a good college, work on a medical career and diploma, find a great job and nice boyfriend... it was all nice, but the last week or so she'd started to question that plan. "I guess, I'm not totally sure anymore. I wanted to get my degree from school and find a good job. But, after meeting Will, there was part of me that didn't know. Maybe, there's something more meant for... me..." Julia said thoughtfully.

"...or you see something about Will that you want to see in yourself?" Miila said with a catty grin. Julia blushed. "It wasn't like that!"

While Julia and Miila were out getting some supplies and Julia's new travel outfit, Kadde took Will out to

the edge of town to see what magical skills he had.

“This should be far enough away. Don't want any bystanders to get hurt.” Kadde said as he took a step back from Will. “Well, show me what you can do.”

Will took a long deep breath and reached into his arcane reserve.

He held out his hand and initiated his lighting spell. A quick snap of energy crackled from his hand and a bluish orb of light manifested like before. It hovered an inch or two above Will's hand for several seconds before he allowed it to burn-out.

“Hmm, basic but practical. How long can you maintain the orb?” Kadde asked.

“Probably a decent while. I've never had trouble setting it for several minutes.” Will said.

“Any other spells or incantations?” Kadde really was curious what different aptitudes Will had.

“I can use a deflection spell.” Will breathed deep again and summoned his deflection shield. It was quite a bit harder to maintain due to its size; roughly as large as himself.

“Impressive. Can you hold it for just a moment?” Kadde rushed to a place 20 paces from Will and threw a rock at the shield. The rock struck the shield with a sharp bang as the shield held. Kadde could clearly see its reverberations and it covered almost enough for 3 people.

“Splendid form!” Kadde was thoroughly impressed with its size and strength. “How long can you keep up the shield?”

Will took a deep breath to recover a bit. “Probably a few moments if I'm lucky. It's a bit heavy,” Will replied.

“Have you ever considered scaling it down, maybe just enough to cover an area the size of a soldier's shield?” Kadde suggested.

“On Myrah we were only ever taught standard spells. They served military purpose, but there hasn't been a major riot for many years. Mostly it's outdated rhetorical spells.”

“But could you make it smaller?”

Will took a moment to think over the mechanics of his shield spell. At the academy, his instructors had always emphasized the size to be big enough to protect other people from injury, but the efficiency of spells was left to advanced combatives; reserved only for Myrah's select corp of secret police.

“Since Ged can be a dangerous place at times, versatility is highly valued. How about this; project your shield again, but only use one hand. A smaller projection point.” Kadde explained as he took some paces back. Will relaxed and just focused his energies through one hand.

The shield spell activated, though this time it felt a bit lighter. The strain was half of what it used to be, and Kadde threw a small stone at the shield. The stone connected with the repulsing energies and outlined an area about the size of Will. The decrease in output also made it easier for him to hold the shield in place.

“Better?”

“Better.” Kadde came back next to Will and asked him to continue his demonstrations. Will hadn't had the chance to cut loose for such a long time, and it felt good to wield his magics so freely finally.

On Myrah use of magic was usually reserved only for classes and exercises. Use outside the academy brought too much attention. Actually, the only group known to use arcana completely unrestricted were terrorists or insurrectionists. Will had heard distant rumors of magi turning against the civic “order” of Myrah.

There were people, usually like Will, born into the lowest tiers of the magi-society who fought against the rigid system set up by the 1st and 2nd class magi. In the distant reaches of Myrah's mountainous sections, the only place the police had real difficulty clamping down, there were whispers of covert rebels striking back from the shadows.

Before Will had left on his adventure, he'd started to wonder why hadn't the secret police simply clamped down on all 3rd class magi citizens? Until now it hadn't occurred to him that maybe there were too many 3rd classers to be completely watched or controlled. Myrah had a population reaching almost a billion people. Probably only about 5 percent were actually first or second class magi-citizens. With over half of all people being non-magic, that meant the other 40-ish percent were probably like Will, third class magi. Powerful enough to be useful, but maybe too numerous to be left uncontrolled.

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“Beg your pardon, Will...” Kadde snapped Will back to attention. “Do you have any offensive spells? It would be nice to finally have someone in our little team who could use spells with a bit more kick.”

Will thought for a moment, there was at least one particular spell he had that he had been working on, but the occasion had never popped-up for its use. “Kadde, you'll want to stand to the side, this one is a bit 'wild'.”

Will stepped up and made sure the road was clear for a decent distance. He'd practiced all the mathematics for this one, all the theoretical parts, but this time he could finally put it to the test. He pulled in the required energies and rose both hands up to the sky. The energies followed and he remembered the next step was to create a crackling orb of miniature 'stars'.

He'd experimented with his light orb for years in secret. It was a simple practical spell, but it also had an unusually nasty side-effect; it burned on touch. Not just a simple spark-burn either, a sharp crackling, explosive burn that could cause serious damage. In time he learned to create several mini-orbs all at once and string them together. That 'mega'-orb was now floating in the air over his head. He launched the orb out in front of him and as it flew forward he had it split into dozens of small clacking, crackling balls of energy.

The balls hit the ground and exploded loudly as they touched rocks, stones and bits of grass. Dust and debris flew in all directions under the force of the miniature blasts. When the dust had died down Kadde and Will inspected the blast site carefully. There were tiny craters where the orbs had made contact and either blasted the rocks to pieces or burned grass to blackened spots.

Kadde was still a bit shocked by the force of the numerous crackling explosions. “Wow! Serious firepower

my friend. That should be useful if we need to level the numbers game." After a few more minutes of inspecting the damage, Kadde had an idea for Will to try out.

"Will, can you split-off individual orbs one-at-a-time, and direct them at individual targets?" Kadde knew the explosion had multiple parts, so maybe it could be used on multiple targets.

"I don't know, Kadde. Each orb is very sensitive to impact. I'd have to have a smaller number. The reason I use a large spread is to make sure I can hit my target. It's tricky controlling individuals." Will explained while recovering his arcanic energies.

In the distance the sun was starting to dip bit-by-bit as the afternoon began to pass. They both took their seats on a few large rocks and discussed the various techniques Will could use for increasing his arcane arsenal. Originally Will had thought his selections of spells was quite nice as it was, but after listening to Kadde he knew that there was so much more.

"On Ged alone, there are at least 200 different known spells for elemental magics alone. Not to mention various non-elemental types of energy bending, magics used by creatures, or even the sacred beasts. That's the wonderful thing about being a scholar; you never stop learning about all of the surprises life has in store."

After a while of discussing arcana and its nature on Ged, Kadde had convinced Will to try his attack order again. "Remember, two fingers, one hand up should reduce the output to a much smaller number." Kadde said from behind Will. He didn't want to be in the way.

Will did as Kadde had suggested and allowed the energies to flow through only two fingers on his right hand. Only 5 small orbs could be seen. Will selected a single target, a rough rocky lump, and directed his spell at the lump of rock.

The result was a gnarled crackling and hissing of explosions. Bits of rock and ground were flung in every which way. The lump was reduced to a decent sized hole by the road.

"I think we're making progress, Will." Kadde said as he patted Will on the back. They inspected the small crater carefully, it was several inches deep, with bits strewn all around. Will was a bit divided, he was glad to be able to learn more about arcana, but not if it made him this worn out.

"Well, that's enough today. There's still much to do before we set out." Kadde looked up as the sun was starting to reach that point in the day where it began to turn towards the late afternoon.

They began to head back to the village together. Will was feeling tired from the day's practice. It felt like lunch had been so long ago. He wondered how Julia's day had gone. She was not just on a very different world, but she had a life of her own back on Earth she was probably missing...

The late afternoon sun had begun to reach the tree-line by the time Will and Kadde returned to the inn. Outside Julia and Miila were waiting, with Julia in her new travel outfit.

"Well boys, what do you think?" Miila said as she nudged Julia forward.

Julia felt a bit awkward in her new clothes; they seemed a bit stiff and heavy. Miila had told her it took a while to 'break-in' travel gear. Julia had small padded shoulders, a padded tunic, wrist guards, light gloves, travel pants, boots, a belt with several pouches and a satchel.

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