

Chapter 19 - Last Jump

Julia heard the sound of feet below and followed Will up the great set of steps. They were pushing up the steps as fast as their tired legs could carry them. Behind them the magi-police had caught up and were in quick pursuit, followed by several other individuals, dressed in red and silver long coats. The top officials of the station were on their tails now, too.

Finally both Will and Julia reached the top of the steps. They were both panting from the exertion, but kept walking, trying to keep clear of spell range.

“Will, what’s going on? What are we going to do?” Julia was stressed, anxious, and afraid, like before on Alth when the dragon had attacked them.

Will pulled the stone from a pouch in his tunic. The little blue stone shined and glistened. Julia hadn’t clearly seen the stone before. The little piece of another world. A long-gone world of magic. A final fragment of arcane energy. Julia was beginning to understand. Will didn’t want the people of his world to have this kind of power. But, he couldn’t run anymore.

“Julia, can I have your hands please?” Saddened, Julia opened both her hands to Will. “I can’t follow, can I?” Julia knew it was rhetorical. The stone had to be sent far away. It was too powerful. Will placed the stone in Julia’s hands. She felt the energies of the stone, its flowing forces that pulled one from place to place.

In that moment, both of them could feel an odd connection between each other. The arcana flowed through both of them. The powers that had been Will’s coursed through Julia as well. She could sense what Will sensed. Clearly feel how he felt.

Finally Will looked into Julia’s eyes. Seeing both Julia and himself. “Goodbye...”

The “Jump” took hold of Julia, finally parting them. She was lifted bodily off the ground as the power of the stone took hold, propelling her up towards the magical barrier of Myrah.

Julia flew up through the cloudy sky of Myrah and smashed through the already weakened magical barrier of the grey world. It all blurred past so quickly without Will’s control.

Julia knew where she was going. Alone in the jump bubble of energy she felt the pull to the left, then to the right. The stars shot by, faster than she could see now.

As if all raced by, Julia felt a slowness inside her. Like the moment was still frozen in her mind. Along with a cold hole she felt in her heart. She couldn’t believe Will was gone, like that. “Pop!” He’d been her companion for heaven knows how long. Had it been months? A year? Longer?

It was all going farther away, all behind her. In the blurry, distant blankness of space. Her memories here flashing past like stars, yet the stone kept pulling her towards her home. Earth, the stilled world.

Will watched Julia leave. Past his reach, past anybody's reach. The girl and the stone, both gone. Will accepted that this was how it was supposed to be. Myrah was his home, flawed as it was. He had been given a vision of how to fix it. But, the road ahead would be even longer.

He breathed deeply, calming his nerves. The magi-police were now at the top of the steps. They circled round slowly. They'd already underestimated this boy before. He'd fought past several guards, defeated their defenses, and sent someone beyond their magical-reach. There were no words wasted between them, only tense silence. This boy needed to be subdued and contained, by any means necessary.

Will flicked his hands in a silent gesture. The magi blasted quickly with shocking stun spheres, but Will's barrier took hold fast. The orbs deflected or stopped completely on contact with the barrier.

Will ran for the edge of the station, grabbed his blade quickly, and jumped. His deflection wall would keep them delayed long enough for him to descend and run. His blade activated its deflection rune as Will chanted his chrono-sphere to slow his fall, just enough not to hurt.

Will felt the spell hold him in place for just an instant, slowing his fight with gravity. He was still moving down, towards the streets below, but would have just enough time to react and escape.

He had one goal in mind now; the control center. For the magi-elites to exert so much control over the world, there had to be something else helping them. There had to be a reason why the capital had never moved, why it stayed in its static location. Only one big reason came to mind, the lay-lines. He'd read somewhere on Earth about lay-lines, the mystical boundary lines that criss-crossed each world, kept all things in balance. And he had a pretty good idea where it was...

He was several feet from the ground still but Will cut the chrono-sphere and fell the rest of the way naturally. As his feet hit the ground, he tucked and rolled to keep on the move.

Will could see it off in the distance, the central office. He'd been there a few times in the past for tests and paperwork. Always the most heavily defended place in the city, probably all of Myrah. Except, now he had a way in.

Melding into the crowds of the city, Will ditched his clothes for others, less conspicuous. He was very glad he didn't have his staff anymore. It was far easier to conceal his short sword in his rags or cloak than his old staff. Made blending-in easier.

The magi-police had to go all the way back down the steps to get to the streets below. They were also having a hard time with crowd control. This rogue-mage was giving them more trouble than those rebels in the outer-regions. Too much. He didn't carry the standard staff or even a cane. He could use unincanted arcana, and multiple castings at the same time.

The elites would undoubtedly have him executed. Only after they'd found out everything he knew. Couldn't let that knowledge go to waste. Or worse yet, get into the hands of a less scrupulous agency.

Only later did they realize the boy had dropped his outfit for another disguise. Even with tracking spells, he was proving hard to pin down. His device or something he did was throwing off a lot of their detection grids, distorting the entire patchwork of utility spells and enchantments. Part of the problem with control... too much rigidity made everything fragile to change.

Myrah had spent the part of the last 200 years slowly choking out the creativity of its people. Cutting off dissenting views. Setting up rules and restrictions for greater “stability.”

Night was coming at last over the city/capital of Myrah. The magi-police were out in full force trying to find Will. One magi making more trouble than had the riots of the past several years.

Will for his part had by now changed clothes thrice. He was using at least three different disruption runes created at street corners to obfuscate any tracking spells. He needed one more rune to complete his square grid. Then, he'd be practically invisible to Myrah's arcana, at least long enough for his final move. The control center.

He completed the last rune well after midnight, but by now the city was practically a ghost town. The magi-police had managed to institute the curfew and hustle any non-vital residents out of the city center. “At least until the emergency was over,” they said.

Will tried to get some rest inside an abandoned apartment complex. The floors were dusty and hard, but he'd endured discomfort before. It'd help prepare him for tomorrow. The last push of his quest. He tried to calm his mind by slowing his breathing, relaxing to the world around him.

At some point he fell asleep into a strange dream. He was flying through all the different worlds he'd seen in the past several months. It felt kind of surreal, but then this whole adventure had been surreal, hadn't it? Mist, the living moon of Hirem; Earth, the world of calm arcana and Julia; Geb, the world of wild magics and numerous peoples and creatures. And finally Alth, the world of separate equals. He'd learned so much from them all, but sadly he'd been forced to continue his search for answers to his own world, Myrah the grey world.

It was hardly sunrise when he woke. The hunger pangs were very harsh; he hadn't eaten in almost 24 hours now. Checking his pouches and pockets, all he had left was a single dried snack from Alth—the last ones Asuka had given them before they had left. “Had it only been 3 days?” Will thought. He hungrily ate it all in a few bites. It was dry, but he felt better having something in his belly finally.

Looking out the broken windows of the abandoned complex, he could occasionally see magi-police pacing the streets. A few other citizens were starting to wake as well. In a few hours the morning rush would begin—the best chance to slip into the tide of humanity and inch his way closer to the central hub.

Sun rose over the mass of buildings and people began to emerge from their homes and apartments to go to work. He waited for the perfect moment to make his move as the underground started its daily rounds. People were beginning to crowd the walkways enough that he could just merge into the urban mess. The magi-police tried hard to find him, but Will had managed to procure a maintenance uniform from the garbage and easily slipped into an oncoming group of civil servants.

Will moved into the bustle of activity, carefully weaving disillusionments and distortions into every corner he turned. Even police that glanced his way merely passed on by. He simply didn't stand out. Ahead stood the main control center of Myrah. It was unlike the other buildings in the capital. It was shaped more like a citadel—half an orb submerged under the street level. Will had read somewhere—ages ago, it seems now—that the original building had been a citadel for the magi-warriors of old to keep watch over the city in times of war. The concentric outer walls gave it the appearance of a large raised amphitheater. At every door stood 2 guards, one on either side. The building only ever had 4 ways in, so the number of ways out was easy to anticipate.

There was a slow trickle of maintenance workers filing into the center. With all of its delicate equipment and apparatuses, there was always a need for internal workers. Will quietly slipped into the flow unnoticed. Despite a heavy police presence, the security of the hub was minimal. He couldn't quite figure out why. Slowly he worked his way through the various corridors to the underground support sections.

From all his studies on the control centers of Myrah, Will knew all the vital machinery was underground. There was an oddly chilly feeling as he crept deeper into the center. It gave Will a very unsettling feeling, as if he knew there was no turning back now.

He could feel the web of security wards and enchantments pick up on his movements. "They know now if they didn't before," he thought. It was all or nothing; there wouldn't be any easy way back anymore.

He smiled slightly. It made everything much simpler this way. It grew darker as he continued deeper to the sub-basement levels. He was now at least 100 feet under ground level. It was almost like a great cavern of circular walls and gates. There were few people at this level. It was all so old and underused that the Magi-Elites had almost completely forgotten the importance of history. These final levels of the center had been dug out centuries ago by the great conquerors of old to house the most powerful artifacts and tools—now, long since forgotten. Much like the Monster King's Lair, the center was where it all led.

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