Among the Stacks

Tale 6

“And I must follow if I can”

Script by Claire A. Dinnebier

Transcript: Maty Parzival Gö.

CONTENT WARNINGS:

(NONE)

INTRO
Hi, Showrunner Nigel popping in with a few quick words ahead of today's episode. First things first - we are crowdfunding right now, for Among The Stacks Season 1. If you like the show and would like to support us in making it, please do consider going to the link in the description of this episode and donating some money. We really appreciate that. Second of all, stick around to the end of this episode to hear a trailer for Hellgate City, a podcast by Kirby Bethans.

(MUSIC)

LUKE (NARRATING)
The first time I saw a cat, I had no idea the encounter would change my life forever.
(WARMLY, FOND) In my homeworld, the closest thing to a cat… I suppose if we wanted to get all technical I would categorize that species as a type of chimera. Imagine an amphitere with the wings of a bat and the head of a lion.
Like amphiteres they were capable of flight. They were quite large. (SADLY) And vicious. No one ever even tried to domesticate one of them… Or if they did they weren't ever able to tell their tales afterwards... It's kind of a shame really.

(SUDDENLY FOCUSES BACK ON THE ACTUAL TOPIC)

(BIRD SOUNDS)

So I saw the cat, a creature I had never seen before, at the edge of the woods. And she saw me. We both stared for a long moment, and then she slowly blinked and just… walked off in the direction of the woods. She didn't bolt, or run. She just sauntered off.
And when she was almost at the tree line, I decided to follow her. It was a spur of the moment decision, not thought through in the slightest.
(CHUCKLES) Most of my decisions still are, I must admit. Even after all those years, a life already longer than any I could have had outside the Library.

(PAUSE)

The cat must have known I was behind her, I surely made enough noise.
And yet somehow I never lost sight of her. Through the forest and over the hills, through streams and meadows of flowers we

went. We walked under a sky that changed from day to night and back again until my feet were sore and my legs almost unbearably heavy. But … still I kept walking.

(PAUSE. BIRDS)

In hindsight I want to lie and say that I pressed on because some part of me already knew what path laid ahead. But the plain and honest truth is that it was curiosity and stubbornness that made… and sometimes still makes… me act this way.
After all, I had never seen anything like this creature and I wanted to observe it. Take notes on it. Draw it. Maybe even befriend it…? I was still young and I was a bit foolish. Nothing more, nothing less.
At last the cat stopped and lay down under a lonely tree in a field. I, utterly exhausted as I was, gladly took the opportunity to rest beside her. In the end it wasn't long until sleep came for me. The last thing I heard was the cat's soft purring.
I had a strange dream then. I dreamed that the tree I was sleeping under would be cut down, processed and made into paper. That that paper would then be bound into a book and that someone would write on the pages. Peeking over their shoulder I could almost make out the words when the mysterious writer suddenly whirled around and I came face to face with… myself.

(BEAT)

And then I woke up somewhere else.

(SOFT MUSIC)

The field and the tree were gone and instead there were rows upon rows of bookshelves. How was this possible?

I tried to orientate myself but my head spun wildly and I thought I was about to wake up again, that I was actually still dreaming. Then I noticed the book from my… first dream? It was lying on the floor, right next to the cat. With nothing else to do and no further direction given I did the only thing I could: I picked up the book.
All the pages were blank.
And then someone said, in my mind, like a dragon of my homeworld might do:

THE CAT
Was your vision not clear? These pages must be filled. And you are to fill them

LUKE (NARRATING)
I spun, almost falling over, since I still felt sore and fatigued from walking even after sleeping for a while.

(BEAT)

The cat looked up at me with those strange eyes.

LUKE (MEMORY)
(UNFAZED BY THE SUDDEN TALKING OF THE CRYPTID) Do tell, kind stranger,...where are we? I seem to be a bit lost

(NARRATING AGAIN)
I might have reacted to this differently, if my family back home hadn't been on such good terms with several creatures capable of mind talk. Between the strange place, the even stranger creature and the mystery of how I'd gotten here, someone speaking in my mind was by far the least abnormal thing about this situation.

THE CAT
You are in the in-between. You squeezed through the flap and came out in the great outdoors. And so did I. You freed me. For that I owe you thanks.
LUKE (MEMORY)
I'm happy to be of assistance.Although I have to admit, I'm not quite sure how I could have helped you. Do you have a name, stranger?
THE CAT
I had - once, back when I still lived with humans. When I was fed and taken care of and adored by them. They gave me a name and it fit me well. But I let go of both them and that name long ago. Perhaps it is finally time for a new one. What about you? Will you keep your old name in the in-between?
LUKE (MEMORY)
Maybe. I guess we will have to wait and see.

(NARRATING AGAIN)
Since then both the cat - that eventually chose a name to her own liking - and the book, the very book you're holding now, have been my most trusty companions. Even after all this time I still struggle to make sense of this place. All I can do is to study and sketch its strange inhabitants and try to catch a

glimpse of the workings of something that is too large to ever fully comprehend.
I've met other people here. I have gained a new name. They call me Luke. I've been told that they call a name given by others a "nickname". My confusion about how my new given name is Luke, not Nick, made them all laugh. I like it when they laugh. It is a warm, happy sound.
Everyone is changed by the bizarre in-between of the Library that isn't anywhere and yet contains everywhere. Some of us have lived and worked here for many decades, for a few of the oldest ones it has even been centuries. I have even heard tales of the first Librarian still existing today, shelving book after book with skeletal fingers held together only by skin as leathery as the cover of an old volume… (SHUDDERS SLIGHTLY) I don't know how much weight to give to these stories but given what my coworkers and I have experienced over the many, many years of my… *employment* here, I am not ready to dismiss anything as impossible. Not anymore.

If you're reading this, that means my book, my research journal is now in your hands. I apologize for the fact that the first chapters are in Harey, my native language, but I did not yet speak any others when I started to work on filling these pages so many decades ago.

There's a translation somewhere… but for now at least my drawings and sketches should be of use to you.

I implore you, whatever you do, please keep my research safe. Stay safe. Oh and… one more thing before I end this…

Would you please look for the cat? She's an excellent predator and can look after herself but now that I am… wherever I am… I'm sure she would appreciate some company. She loves to be scratched behind the ears.

Could you do that for me?

Sending you warmth and light

Lukayne "Luke" Stonewater, employed Librarian at the Infinite Library

END.

NIGEL
The title of today's tale was "And I must follow if I can". It was written by Claire A. Dinnebier, it starred Oliver Graham the voice of Lukeynie and the Cat, it was directed by Alex Kingsley, it was scored and produced by Linwood with End Credits Music by Alex Shorts. Rate and Review us in your podcatcher of choice, we really appreciate it. It helps us find new people who may enjoy the show. Follow us on our Twitter, at: amongstacks or on tumblr amongthestackspodcast. Visit our website amongthestackspodcast.com for more news, info and transcripts. Join our Discord Server which is linked in the Description of this episode. Thank you so much for listening! Here now is a trailer for Hellgate City, a podcast by Kirby Bethans. Hellgate City is an award winning comedy fiction podcast about Kirby Bethans, a neurotic radio-jockey in a dystopian Cyperpunk version of New York City. After Kirby uses a new fangled device to broadcast his nightmares for ratings, he overshares a repressed memory of a murder, and must conquer dark forces and folly to solve the crime, before he becomes the next victim. Hellgate City is a rollicking Sci-Fi Comedy Podcast with a macabre underbelly. The award-winning first season is out now, it features audio production with narration, voice acting, sound effects and original music.
Winner of CrowdUltra's Top 5 New Fiction Podcast Award, Hellgate City is not to be missed. And now, here is the trailer. But until then, stay tuned, stay listening. And Sapere Aude.

END OF EPISODE.