

Mythic Chapter 5

Flying above the city so no one would notice her, Jessica moved towards the Cafe that she usually went to with her friends after school. They might still be there, after all, and she had a few things she wanted to talk to them about. Of course, finding it was a bit more difficult than normal. Haven looked like a very different place from above than it did from within. Something she'd have to get used to.

It took a few difficult minutes, but she did find it. And her friends were still there! She did a little ariel loop without noticing, and bee-lined for a nearby ally. No point in making it too obvious who she was for anyone watching, after all.

She landed on the ground without incident, surprising herself some, considering all the trees she'd run into earlier. Maybe she was just overthinking it back then? Nonetheless, once on the ground, she quickly coiled herself up and shifted back to her human form. She still had no idea how that looked from the outside, unfortunately. She was rather curious.

Once back in her human form, she hurried out of the alley and down the street to meet her friends before they had to leave.

"Hey girls!" Jessica called, waving at her friends once she was within hearing range. They looked over at her, some surprise written on their faces as they saw her, and waved back. "Sorry I was gone so long." Jessica told them once she was at the table.

"That's fine." Tiff said with a shake of her head. "After what we'd been told in class, we weren't sure you'd be able to show up at all."

"Yeah. All they would really tell us was that you were being 'privately tutored' for a couple days." Said Leah. "Does it have to do with the..." she looked both ways and leaned towards Jessica, finishing in a whisper. "snake things?"

"Yeah." Jessica nodded, and took a seat. "Turns out, there was another one of us nearby, a dragon, and he decided to teach me some stuff. The fact that I have to eat a lot more now, for instance."

"How much more?" Asked Carol

"I have to eat a whole deer at least once every couple days. Well, I guess it doesn't have to be a deer, but that's probably what most of them will be." Jessica winced at the thought. As much as she liked doing that, she was still rather conflicted. She supposed she would get used to it, though. "And lots of smaller animals, in between. Mostly rabbits."

"Rabbits?" Jasmine asked.

"I had twelve today." Jessica said with a deadpan stare.

"Ah." Jasmine said, then looked her friend up and down. "Where do they...?"

"I have no idea!" Jessica said, throwing her arms up in the air. "You can't see anything I eat in my couatl form when I'm human, and it makes no sense! Just blame it on magic, I guess."

"I suppose so." Tiff said. "So, other than that, anything interesting happened? And what's a couatl?"

"I'm a couatl, apparently. I didn't really get much of an explanation beyond that, though." Jessica sighed. "I found out my teacher is a Seeker, which is...interesting, to say the least." The other girls all nodded, their eyes slightly wide. "And I spent most of the day learning to fly. There are no stories that come close to describing how awesome that is. Would have been nice if he didn't teach me to do that by him dropping me from a mile up, but once I got over the fear..." Jessica closed her eyes for a moment. "It was wonderful. Feeling the wind through my feathers, and the warm sun along my scales." She sighed.

"And the book?" Jasmine asked, eyes focusing on the tome in front of her friend.

"Homework. I'm not even sure what it's about." Jessica said, lifting the book up and reading the cover. "'Ancient Myths of the First Age, by Albert Rosena.' The First Age? Why do Myths from then matter?"

"Who's Albert Rosena?" Jasmine asked. "Can I see the book?"

"Yeah, sure." Jessica handed it over, and all her friends leaned over the table to take a closer look.

Jasmine opened it up to the front cover and read. "'Published in 2012, of the 7th age, in Sylise.'" Everyone blinked. "The 7th age?! This thing is Ancient. How does your teacher have this?"

Jessica shrugged. "He's old. No idea how old beyond very."

Tiff put her finger on a written statement below the main line. "'Edited by Alkein'. Who's Alkein?" She asked.

"My teacher." Jessica said. "Definitely really old."

The girls all 'huh'ed at that, before Jasmine handed the book back. "Do you think he'd mind if I visited to see what other books he has?" She asked.

"I can ask him for you tomorrow." Jessica said. "Now, tell me what happened at school."

Not much, as it turned out. The class had been told that Jessica wasn't going to be there for the next week. This sparked plenty of rumors and wild guesses, and her friends spent most of the day denying any knowledge of what was going on. Which was mostly true. Soon, though, the five friends had to make their ways home, and bid each other goodbye.

It was already getting dark by the time Jessica managed to get home. Attempting to open the door quietly so her mom didn't notice her entrance, she quickly slipped through and gently closed it behind her. On soft feet, she tip-toed towards the stairs, only to stop halfway there from a 'uh-hm' from behind. Jessica cringed and turned around.

Her mom was standing in the living room, arms crossed and glaring. "How was school, dear?" She asked.

"Uh." Jessica glanced at the stairs for a moment, before facing her mother again. "I didn't actually go. I got kidnapped by a dragon, instead."

"Yes, I know. The University called. The Dragon was your school." Her mother tapped her foot on the ground. "Now, I'll ask again. How was school, dear."

"Oh. They called you. And you weren't worried about the...Right." Jessica took a breath to calm down, and then sighed. "Right. School was fine. I ate a whole deer. That was...odd. And he threw me from a mile in the air to teach me to fly."

"Oh? That's higher than I would expect." Her mom said with hmm. "Did he give you any other lessons?"

Jessica shrugged. "Most of the day was him helping me master flight, honestly. I, uh, broke a lot of trees. Other than that, we went over some of the basics of Mythics as a whole."

Her mother nodded. "Good. And the book, there?" She nodded at the book Jessica was carrying.

"Homework." She said. "It's 'Ancient Myths of the First Age.' I just grabbed it at random, but it sounds like he's going to want me to read everything on his shelf at some point, so, I don't think it really matters where I start."

"I've read that book, actually. Lots of interesting pieces of information in there." Her mom said. "I suspect you'll find the parts about your species most interesting, however."

“Couatls are in here?” Jessica asked. “Wait, you’ve read this?”

“Of course I have.” Her mom said. “Now, dinner will be ready in an hour. You should head upstairs and get started on that book. I’ll call you down when the food’s ready.” With that, her mom turned and walked towards the kitchen.

Jessica stood there for a minute, blinking as she tried to figure out why, and how, her mom would have read this book before. Then, she turned and walked up the stairs with mechanical precision.

“Oh.” Her mom called up after her. “I ordered you a new bed. It should be here in a few days. You’ll just have to sleep on your mattress until then.”

Jessica just nodded, and walked into her room.

The next hour went by fairly quickly, and Jessica found that her mom was right. This was a very interesting book. It listed a lot of creatures, some of which she knew existed in the wilds, somewhere. Worgs, a fox creature called a Kitsune, Wyverns, Fire Birds and Phoenixes, as well as the differences between them. Twelve different types of dragons and much besides. But, just as her mom predicted, as soon as she realized that Couatls were in the book, she skipped right to that section.

It was an interesting read, especially with all of Alkeins notes written on the sides.

At first, it was a simple description of what her species looked like. It was perfectly accurate, to. Large snake, rainbow scales, rainbow, feathered wings. It didn’t mention the hood, but she assumed that was simply a matter of variation. Not too uncommon among magical creatures. It described favored habitats. Tropical jungles, apparently. She’d have to visit one and see what she thought, at some point. Various cultural and mythological links, none of which she thought would really apply in the modern world.

And, of course, abilities.

First was size shifting. She’d already confirmed that she could, in fact, alter her size. Not that she had much time to experiment, so she didn’t know what, if any, limits that ability had, but it did mean she could curl up on her mattress in her couatl form without breaking anything. Which was oddly pleasant.

Second, she could manipulate luck. Not to any level of precision, according to the book, but she could grant general ‘good’ or ‘bad’ luck to others, if she so wished. No details on how it worked, of course. Apparently, at least according to the legends, this was often used to reward

those that helped a couatl, or their lord, and to punish those that wronged them. Useful, but until she actually knew how it worked, Jessica planned to leave it alone.

She had several different types of venom she could switch between at will. Once she figured out how, anyways. A neurotoxin, a paralytic, some sort of charm, and anesthesia. Honestly, it sounded a lot like her mouth was a chem lab. She would have preferred a true alchemical lab, but there was only so much you could realistically place in a mouth, she supposed.

She could fly, of course, but she could also manipulate light. The book didn't go into much detail about how much or how well, but it sounded like she should be able to make illusions. Again, once she figured out how.

There were a half-dozen minor things that were constantly on, immunity to other poisons, for instance, but most of them weren't likely to come up, any time soon. She had enough to consider and experiment with, anyways.

When dinner was ready, Jessica was called down and found that her mother had made raw chicken. Not cold chicken, it was warmed so that it felt as if it was either alive, or only just killed, but not cooked. It was seasoned with a number of herbs that she'd never heard of before, and very lightly buttered.

Jessica was a little uncertain about the meal until she actually tried it. It was the best thing she'd ever had.