

Isekai Jobhunting

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Prolog: Prologue or a fated meeting perhaps?

The tension was ringing in the air. Just 5 more seconds left...

4... 3... 2... 1...

And... Time for lunch break! Daniel grabbed his coat, cigarettes and umbrella and rushed through the door mumbling a 'See ya'. He stepped outside and was instantly welcomed by a gust of icy cold air. It may be freezing but at least he could finally get away from this gloomy atmosphere that always surrounded this office. He looked up at the sky. Grey, heavy clouds hung above the entire city, almost as if they're trying to suffocate it. Daniel sighed and lit a cigarette. When the small flame gushed out, it warmed his hands for a few moments. Then he set off to the the same café as usual.

As he left the shop with steaming hot potatoes filled with parsley pesto and a Chai Latte, he felt like he is being watched. But there was no one nearby.

Slightly anxious he quickened his pace a bit and turned at the next corner. He looked back but there was no one following him.

'Was it just my imagination?'

Confused he scratched his head when he heard a tiny buzzing sound.

'From above?'

He looked up. Just to meet the eyes of a small girl with long, jet black hair loosely braided to a ponytail. She was wearing a flowing, red dress that looked like a rose and most stunning of all, there was a pair of faintly glowing wings attached to her back. They were almost as big as her. Long, paper-thin and translucent at the tips.

"Huhhhh?!"

Daniel stumbled backwards, almost letting his precious meal fall.

"Ah. You noticed me?"

The fairy flew down to his eye-level and hesitantly hovered a while. Then she floated further downwards until her feet touched the ground. Standing right in front of each other, the size difference became very apparent. While Daniel was of tall build, the fairy girl barely reached half of his height. Yet her frame seemed rather fragile. Too frail for any ordinary child.

"Urgh... I'm not used to this..."

She tried to smile and hide her disgust for the dirty asphalt, as well as the cigarette smell.

"Ahem. My... apologies, stranger. I hope I didn't startle you?"

She looked up to him with deep, scarlet red eyes.

On the other hand, the look on Daniel's face expressed nothing but surprise.

"Uhm, my name is Florette. As you can surely see, I'm a Fairy Scout and I've come to find..."

She tilted her head, looking for the right words. "...something... like an interesting artefact from this world." She gazed at him with an intense look, waiting for a reply.

Daniel inconspicuously checked the surroundings for any hidden cameras. 'If this is some kind of prank, they did a real good job with that masquerade... Guess I'll play along for now.'

He reached out his hand for a handshake.

She stared at it for a while.

"Oh! You want compensation for the information?"

"No, I just wanted to-"

"It's fine. I'm new to this position, so I'm not yet used to the customs of other worlds."

She took a note book which was attached to the back her belt and opened it.

"Alright. Let's see..." She flipped through a few pages. "I believe gold is a common currency in many places. Would one gold coin suffice?"

Again that expectantly stare from her.

"Shouldn't I introduce myself first? You haven't given me a proper chance yet."

"Oh, dear! I forgot..."

"Though I would take that gold coin!" Daniel smirked a bit. "Well, I'm Daniel. I work at an office nearby and I must say, your costume is pretty nice. Looks expensive... Especially those wings. Oh, and how did you do the 'appearing out of the sky' and flying effect?"

Now it was Florette's turn to be startled.

"I... Ah... Uhm... Maybe one question at a time, please..."

She seemed a bit flustered.

"This dress isn't that special, you know... Though a friend of mine recommended it to me. They said, red suited me."

"I see... And you're here for... what? An artefact?"

"Well, it doesn't have to be an artefact precisely. I just want to bring a special souvenir home to cheer someone up."

"Let me guess, a friend of yours?"

"Yes, but another one."

"What does this friend like?"

"Hmm... She likes flowers and strange things from strange places. But recently she has been so depressed, nobody could find anything that could bring her smile back. So, I thought I'd get her something extremely strange."

"And that's why you came here?"

"Yes."

"You think this place is strange enough to find something 'really strange'?"

"Please, I don't mean to insult your home world. Though I've already seen quite a few strange things so far..."

She pointed at his lunch.

"This for example. It's very peculiar."

Daniel tried not to laugh.

"Those are just ordinary hot potatoes..."

She pointed at his suit.

"And your attire is also unusual. But what strikes me most interesting are your eyes."

"My eyes?"

"Yes, they're blue like the sky."

He looked up. The heavy clouds were still hanging there, blocking any ray of sunlight that tried to make its way down to earth. The girl shook her head.

"I mean the sky from my world. Not this world's sky. Everything is so dull and grey here. And these high, rectangular buildings... I feel like I'm in a prison here."

Her expression changed a bit. Maybe it was homesickness?

"It's not everywhere like this... But if you want to bring your friend something special,

you can have my hot potato.”

A certain spark came back to Florette's eyes.

“That would be very kind of you!” She bows to him. “I shall take it with me!”

She reached to her belt pocket to pull out another book. This one was a lot bigger and heavier than the first with ancient, complicated looking signs on it. As she opened it a warm light escaped the pages and some of the signs started moving and left the book. They began to dance around the two of them and circled around.

“Ok, Florette, was it? How much did you pay for this fancy effect?”

“This book? It's not mine actually. I just... 'borrowed' it from the friend of a friend. Though he'll probably get mad at me if he knows that I'm the one using it.”

“Is he that strict?”

“No, he's just worried that I'll break things with it... Now where was that spell again...”

She turned a few pages, apparently looking for the right page.

“Wait, wait, wait...! Do you know what you're doing??”

Daniel had a feeling that this could end badly for him.

“Well, I think so...”, was Florette's response and this feeling just got worse.

She lifted her free hand up to the sky and shouted an incantation.

“Exuni versa dori ginem!”

The glowing signatures suddenly spat out fire and engulfed everything in a blinding light. Daniel quickly tried to shield the blazing flames with his arms but was thrown backwards and lost his footing.

Kapitel 1: Other-worldly accident

'Am I dead now?'

The throbbing pain in his head couldn't be ignored just like that.

'It hurts way too much.'

His pulsating heart was also still racing.

'Guess I'm not dead yet.'

Daniel slowly opened his eyes. Everything was blurry. Not being able to use his vision properly, he listened to his surroundings. Some faint voices seemed to approach from afar.

"Florette! What have you done?!"

"Uh, oh... I'm sorry, Faylenn! I'm sorry!"

That's Florette's voice. And the other voice...?

Daniel tried to focus his eyes. Bit by bit, he started to recognize two silhouettes.

Florette seemed to argue with someone who was also dressed up like right out of a fantasy novel. And - just like her - he had a pair of wings attached to his back. Though his wings were thicker, wider and pointier than Florette's fragile, long, but round ones. His outfit looked very noble with a lot of intricate details. It must have costed quite a small fortune.

Daniel rubbed his eyes and tried to ignore the headache that made every noise sound dampened. On top of that his stomach felt like it's rotating around his belly. He tried to stand up but the dizziness made it impossible, so he just stayed in a half-sitting, half-lying position.

"What kind of weird costume party is going on here? And maybe you should make your special effects less... realistic... And where are we? What the heck happened?"

He looked up to find himself in a tall room, seemingly without any ceiling. The room, or rather, hall was completely round, without any corners and the wooden walls were carved into huge bookshelves.

The fairy boy aggressively fluttered into his line of sight and circled around him.

"Ah, this! What in the world did you bring along? You know, you're forbidden to bring any creatures from other worlds here! Especially, when they don't exist here! And even worse: It can talk! Ugh, creepy..."

He gave Florette an annoyed, questioning look but she just rolled her eyes.

"Of course he can talk. He must at least be a medium intelligent life form. He's wearing clothes after all, so he can't be an animal. And we were able to communicate and trade. Though I don't think he's an elf with these round ears. Actually, he looks a bit like us. Just without wings, don't you think, Faylenn?"

So, apparently the boy's name was 'Faylenn'. A strange name for a strange guy.

"What are you saying, Florette? This is 100% NOT an elf. If anything, he's might be an elven miscarriage or something. Just look at this ugly face..."

He stopped flying circles around Daniel and stared at him, squinting his eyes.

"This... could it be..."

He pulled out a wand from his expensive looking robe and swung it around in a complicated pattern. It began to glow a bit and summoned a book from the top rows

of the library. It came flying down elegantly and hovered in front of him. He mumbled something incomprehensible and flipped it open with the tip of his wand.

"Yes, this book here... Rare and extinct species..."

Suddenly, the book snapped at him. Faylenn was just barely fast enough to not get punched by it.

"Excuse me! I'm an encyclopedia! Not just any random book."

That voice – I kid you not - was coming from the book. Faylenn rolled his eyes and replied with a grumpy tone. "Yes, one encyclopedia of many. Don't you forget who your master is!"

"Hmpf. Rude, as always, I see." Even though the book – Pardon, encyclopedia – wasn't able to show any expressions visually, it sounded very much like it was sulking.

"Well then, what do you need to know, master?"

It definitely spit that last word out in a defiantly manner.

"Oh, quiet, you. Show me the page about humanoids."

Reluctantly, the tome opened up and revealed an entry titled as 'humans'. Faylenn quickly skimmed it, then nodded.

"Right. I'm sure of it:

No wings, no claws, no tails, round ears, maximum adult height of around two fairies. Plus, there's only one species in this world with sky blue eyes...

And that's... humans."

Somewhat proud of figuring it out by himself, he slammed the encyclopedia shut and released it back to its place in the shelf. Daniel could have sworn to have heard a quiet complaint from within the pages.

Faylenn now pointed his wand at Daniel.

"Stay back, Florette. This might be dangerous. Who knows what he can do..."

Again he got this weird feeling that this wouldn't end well for him.

"Alright, calm down, ok? Yes, I'm human but that's not unusual. You can tune down your acting. Really, I'm just a passerby and I don't want to get involved in some kind of role-play."

Deep down an inner voice already seemed to know that this wasn't any ordinary costume party. And it wasn't a theatre or movie either. Nobody could pull off these kind of special effects. Though Daniel was still hoping that he might have been mistaken. That maybe all of this was just a dream.

But then he looked at the fairies in front of him. The painful stinging in his head remained as well... It really wasn't a dream.

"Acting? 'Role-play'? Who do you think I am, huh?" The male fairy angrily waved around his wand.

Daniel bit his lip. He wanted to reply something harsh but if his hunch was right, he didn't want to start a fight with an other-worldly magician fairy that could possibly pulverize him in an instant. He tried to stand up but this time his stomach really felt like it was doing a backflip. He bent over and coughed.

"He's attacking! Careful, Florette!" Faylenn tried to push her back but she evaded him skillfully.

"Faylenn... Isn't he just sick from teleporting?" She tilted her head and gave him a criticizing look. "I remember the first time you teleported, you-"

"Stop, stop, stop! Nobody needs to know about that!" He hastily interrupted her. Then he took a deep breath and sighed. "Alright. You win... I'm not going to kill him. For now..."

Florette nodded relieved. "Now, don't fight, you two. This is kind of my fault after all... I just wanted to teleport myself and this 'poteito'-thing back. I just accidentally brought this human along."

"Then take responsibility for this 'accident'!" Faylenn hissed at her. Florette flinched back a bit. Before she could say anything, someone was knocking at a door that was located a few meters above the ground of the library. Faylenn sighed and rolled his eyes. "What is it now...? Yes, I'm coming!" He flew upwards, turning around midway. "I'm watching you human! Don't you dare touch anything!" He bumped into a bookshelf. Embarrassed he threw an angry stare downward and quickly opened the door.

Kapitel 2: Court Alchemist

Before him levitated a stack of books, bending over at an alarming rate, as if it could fall at any second. A strained voice muttered behind it. "Excuse me... I fixed the first batch of the fire ball books that you requested..." The stack entered the library while the tower of books dangerously leaned forward.

Faylenn suspiciously raised a brow.

"Oh, Durin. Yes... I almost forgot about that. Just put them on that pile over there." He pointed at another stack of books which looked more sorted and straight but not really stable either.

"Aye, aye..." The book tower slowly hovered toward it revealing another small fairy boy with dark green, almost black hair and thick glasses. He was about half the size of the load he was carrying and he looked quite exhausted too. He quickly glanced at the human visitor. "What's going on, Faylenn? I heard some noise before..." He heaved the new books onto the existing pile, making it sway significantly. Then he fluttered to the ground towards Daniel.

"That...! Looks interesting... Where did you find this species?" He circled around him and then turned around to look at Florette with surprise while he rearranged the position of his glasses on his nose.

"You... brought him?"

Florette hopped up and down in the air. She was obviously filled with excitement though her expression didn't change much and wouldn't have given her feelings away.

"Yes, I found him. I teleported him along but it was an accident..." She tilted her head.

"I could have sworn, I pronounced the spell from your book correctly though..."

"You must have made an error somehow or this wouldn't have happened... For now, I think it's better if I confiscate that book before you cause more havoc."

Florette nodded sadly and gave the newly arrived fairy her book.

"You're probably right, Durin. I'm sorry."

"But this... creature there. Is it what I think it is?" He curiously looked at Daniel but kept a safe distance from him.

Faylenn rolled his eyes. "It's likely to be a human."

"For real? Amazing! We should tell the Queen immediately!"

"Good idea! I'm sure Queen Alba will find this very interesting!" Florette then remembered something. "Oh, and I better bring this 'poteito' to her before it gets cold!"

Faylenn who had tried to prevent the crooked book tower from falling apart hastily turned around and almost crashed into it himself. "Don't you dare! You-!"

Durin got between them. "Calm down, Fay. You know about the Queen's depression. Something new might indeed cheer her up. I'm sure Florette only wanted to help out."

"How can you say that, Durin?" Faylenn pushed the book tower back into position.

"We don't know what his kind can do. If it endangers the Queen...!"

"Oh, please... Fay! It's just a human. As Court Alchemist I know, they don't have any special powers that could harm us." He tried to calm Faylenn down.

"I still don't trust him! But if you insist on defending him, why don't you keep an eye

on him until I can send him back to his own world? And don't call me Fay."

Durin stopped circling around Daniel. "What? Why me? I'm busy with work, I don't have time to babysit a stranger."

Faylenn laughed sarcastically. "Well, me neither! The teleporter that Florette destroyed with her entrance won't fix itself!"

They both exchanged glances and then turned around to look at Florette.

But said fairy had already disappeared.

"Ah, she's gone..." Durin stated the obvious. That was the end of Faylenn's patience.

He angrily clenched his fists and kicked the stack of books.

"I can't believe that- Argh!" With a roaring crash the entire tower fell over and spread out all the books on the floor. Some pages that had loosened themselves from their books silently glided down following the rest of the mess.

Faylenn slowly took a very deep breath through his teeth.

Durin flinched his eyes. "Uh, oh... I think it's time for me to go as well... The Scout team is still waiting for their equipment..." He grabbed Daniel's hand and headed to a second door that was at floor level. "You better come with me. I don't think you want to be nearby when Fay gets mad..." He whispered to him and they both quickly escaped out of the library. As soon as Durin closed the door behind them, they could hear a loud array of swearwords and a thundering growl from inside. "That was close... But don't worry, he may sometimes get like that but he'll calm down if you leave him alone for a while." He sighed.

They went through a narrow corridor towards the sunlight. Then again, for the fairies this would be a normal sized path but for Daniel with his 1,80 m height it was quite small. When they reached the end, he put his hand before his eyes to protect them from the brightness of the sun rays outside. A breeze of fresh forest air greeted him as they stepped outside onto a wide platform that was connected to the trunk of a huge tree which they came out of.

"Oh, we were inside a tree this entire time? I wouldn't have guessed... It's so elaborate and the walls don't look like it at all..." Daniel was still stunned by these new experiences. He had never seen anything like it before and not even the most detailed CG movies could top the view of the scenery in front of him.

"This was built through years of hard work. Centuries ago, the magic library was constructed by our ancestors and it took them 20 summers to hollow out the tree and carve in all the protective runes which were – and still are – necessary for the valuable magical books inside. You know, they keep out the humidity and bugs and so on..." Durin proudly pointed at the strange looking carvings that were engraved around the entire tree trunk.

"Ah, by the way, I am Durin, Royal Court Alchemist. I mix potions, make magically enhanced paper and I take care of the Royal Archives. The pretty fairy that brought you here is Florette. She's a Scout Fairy. That means she's going on missions around the world for our kingdoms sake. Though that usually doesn't include other worlds... Currently, she's looking for a cure to our Queen's depression but that's a long story..." He paused and looked up the tree trunk with a worried expression on his face.

Then he continued his monologue.

"And the grumpy guy you met inside just now is Fay- ehem, Faylenn. He is our Royal Court Magician. Not many people are as talented as him. I'm sure you noticed his deep purple eyes. It shows his aptitude for magic." He sighed and added: "Quite unlike my own colour. It's just a light, greyish purple."

Daniel tried to take a closer look at his eyes without creeping too close and making himself seem like a weirdo. Though it was difficult to get a good look behind Durin's thick glasses and his constant up and down as he levitated in the air. "Now that you say it... Well, not that I know anything about that. No one has purple eyes in my home world."

Durin gave him a tired smile. "But enough about history and us boring fairies. I'm more interested in you. Where do you come from? Who are you? Are there more of your kind?"

Daniel hesitated a bit, then he answered reluctantly: "My name is Daniel Berengar. I'm from Mitterteich. It's a small town in my country, you probably haven't heard about it anyway...

I work in a small office and..." He stopped mid-sentence, his eyes widened in panic.

"God, I completely forgot... my lunch break should be over by now! I have to go back! My boss is gonna roast me!"

He grabbed the fairy by its collar. "Can you get me back to my home world? Please, it's-" Durin patted his hand and shoved him away, politely but determined.

"Well... Sorry, no can do. It seems you broke the teleporter when Florette came back with you. You know, that big apparatus that you landed next to in the library... It's gonna take a while to fix that again."

Daniel gave him an anxious look. "How long?"

"About... Let's see..." Durin thought about it a bit.

"...maybe 15 days..."

"Fifteen!? Days??"

"Well, yes. It could take longer though. It depends on how fast we can get the materials together and we can't make a single mistake or the machine might accidentally implode or warp the dimensions in an uncomfortably painful way, you know..."

Daniel's legs gave in and he fell on his knees. He wouldn't be able to return for almost 2 weeks.

"I'm doomed..."

Kapitel 3: A ray of hope

"Come now, human. Don't fret." Durin patted Daniel's head. Did he think of him as a new pet?

"At least you didn't loose any limbs from the teleportation."

Daniel gave him a puzzled look.

"It sometimes happens when travelling between worlds. Didn't they tell you before?"

Durin returned that confused look. Daniel shook his head.

"I don't know anything any more... Just what should I do now? I'm basically lost in a fantasy world and surrounded by tiny, crazy people with wings!"

Durin grumbled a bit. "We're fairies. And not everyone is like Fay and Florette... I swear!"

"Who's going to water my plants at home? Who will feed my dog? The food in the fridge will go bad. And Katha is gonna worry about me..." Daniel completely ignored Durin. "Plus I'll be missing my mother's birthday next week... She's not gonna be happy..."

The despair was written on his face and he seemed to be close to breaking out in tears yet he held back. Durin watched him with growing concern. The guy was to be pitied but what could he do?

'I wanted to dissect parts of this human as a specimen for my collection but listening to him like that... maybe I'm not doing it after all... He seems to have strong connections with his home world and I don't want to attract anyone's wrath.' he thought to himself. Then he reached out his hand to the human.

"It was just a bad stroke of luck. How about you make the best out of the time while you have to stay here? For now, you could help me with making some equipment that is needed for the Scout fairies. I'll ask them to look for some materials for the teleporter during their next expedition."

Daniel sighed and accepted the fairies hand.

"I don't really have another choice, do I? The faster I can get back home, the better."

He stood up again. "What kind of equipment do you need?"

Durin's eyes lit up, happy to have found an opportunity to boast his magic skills. "Glad, you asked! The Scout Teams need new magic books. But let me explain first: Not everyone can use magic. Those who do usually have purplish eyes because the magic accumulates within them and that shows best in the area of the orbital socket. So, for the non-magic-users we have magic books. They contain a variety of spells which are written on magically enhanced paper. Depending on what spells are needed, I compile the proper pages that match their intended use. There can only be one spell per page and after using it a few dozen times the paper starts to crumble and it will become unusable."

He paused a bit. "Are you still following me, human?"

Daniel squinted his eyes. "Well, mostly. In short, you're a bookbinder for magic books, right?"

The fairy raised a brow. "Actually, my official title is still the Court Alchemist. But I also do the bookbinding since we're always short of hands."

Especially, short of talented hands..." He shrugged.

"If you get that, then follow me. I'll bring you to my workspace." He waved and flew off the platform towards the neighbouring tree which was just as tall as the other one but less thick. Daniel went to the edge of the platform. There was no railing, so he carefully peaked over the rim. It was going down for at least 20 meters.

Durin came flying back to him with an awkward smile. "Goodness, sorry! I forgot, you can't fly..." He reached into his pockets and pulled out a silver baton.

On second glance, it looked like a wooden wand but its surface was completely metallic.

"Ahem", The Alchemist cleared his throat and took a deep breath.

"Ven tis!"

His wand started glowing and emitted light blueish shimmering rays as the air around it compressed itself. Before Daniel's eyes a small wind hose built itself up.

And it got bigger and bigger and bigger. "Alright. I'll carry you over now." Durin pointed the wand forward and the wind followed in the same direction.

Daniel shivered. "Maybe I'm not good with heights... Is there no other way to get there?"

"Well... No." Durin replied.

"We are already at the lowest level. We fairies don't have any doors on ground level. It would be too inviting for those who aren't invited..."

Before Daniel could complain, the fairy had lifted the wand and lifted him up into the air, away from the save ground of the platform, which – seen from afar – turned out to be a giant mushroom.

Daniel's face almost turned white, as he mumbled to himself a repeated array of swearwords and 'oh-my-god-I'm-gonna-die's. Durin tried not to laugh but his smirking mouth gave him away.

"What's wrong? Do you not trust my abilities? I'm Court Alchemist, you know? My magic skills are a lot more refined than a certain Scout fairy's."

He flicked the wand quickly up and down.

"Behold and witness!"

Leaves rained down from the tree tops, bulking together, flocking into the form of a huge falcon with glowing eyes. By another swing of the wand, the green leaves turned yellow, red and brown – as befitting for a falcon. The bird circled around them twice and then it guided the human to a different mushroom platform with strange markings.

After Daniel landed, he fell to his knees, almost tempted to kiss the ground but – for his dignity's sake – he didn't. The falcon turned around and dissolved itself into a rain of leaves, disappearing as fast as it had appeared.

Durin proudly hovered next to Daniel.

"Do you know, how many months it took me to learn that? Anyone can do a little breeze but assembling so many leaves at the right time, at the right place..."

"Yeah, yeah... I get it. You can make leaf birds... but I'd be much happier if you had a spell to get me back home, you know?"

Durin let his wings hang.

"When you put it like that, it doesn't sound that awesome anymore..."

He sighed. "Well, then let's get the repair materials..."

Kapitel 4: How to make a magic book

Daniel got back on his feet again and stepped a bit further away from the edge of the platform.

Just in case.

When his feet touched the ground, a part of it lit up.

"Oh, what have I done now...? Don't tell me, you placed land mines here?"

"What mines? You just stepped on a magic rune. No harm done."

Daniel felt relieved, while Durin explained:

"This is my work space. I make magically enhanced paper here. That's what these engravings on the ground are for."

He flew over to a stack of wooden boxes and pulled out a few loose pages and a bottle with a glowing, dark blue liquid in it. It was labelled in a different language, incomprehensible for the human. The fairy showed them to Daniel.

"This paper here is already enhanced and ready for spell pouring. You can tell by tearing it apart."

He gave him one page.

"Try it."

Daniel raised a brow and tried to rip the paper. It was very tough and durable. When he finally managed to put a tear in it, the edges glowed golden for a while before they turned ashen grey.

"Ok, so magic paper glows when torn."

"Well, yes, you could say it like that too..."

Durin pointed at the ground where an array of cryptic signs was engraved. "And this is the so-called 'recording circle'." He placed one of the paper sheets in the middle.

"First you put the pages into this circle here and pour some ink on it." Daniel sceptically watched him but the fairy ignored him and continued.

"Then I stand on the other circle over here." A few steps away there was another, similar but bigger circle in which Durin made a pin-point accurate landing.

"Now everything is ready for the spell pouring. And we should be quick about it. It needs to be done before the ink dries."

He drew his wand again. "All I have to do now is to perform the spell that I want to be absorbed by the page. The recording circle will automatically record the spell and the ink will arrange itself into properly readable summoning text."

He flipped his wand around and again the air compressed itself. This time not to produce a whirlwind but to heat up until a fireball formed in mid-air. At the same time the ink splat started moving on paper and aligned itself on the page. Once the ink settled in the right position, its glow disappeared and Durin let the fireball dissolve.

"Now, it's your turn."

Daniel raised a brow. "You know I can't do magic."

Durin shook his head. "Magic isn't 'done', it's performed. But even non-magic commoners can perform spells. These magic books were made for people without magic talents. Anyone can activate a spell simply by reading the text on the page. Since the signs are made of magic ink, the text they form is readable in any language. You should be able to read it as well. Just make sure to speak loud and clearly, and

don't get the pronunciation or timing wrong. Otherwise, you'll end up like Florette."

He picked up the freshly made page and gave it to the human. "Try it."

Daniel hesitated. "Do I have to? I'd rather not have another 'accident'..."

"It's fine. I am here. Besides, you're going to need it if you want to go with the Scouts."

"What will I need a fireball for? It's not just for a campfire, is it? Are they fighting something?"

"... Yes... but we don't fight much with open fire. It's too risky for our wings. We only use fire for melting materials in a transportable shape or for warding off wild animals."

"But you do fight?"

"... Yes." The fairy responded reluctantly.

"Against what?" Daniel immediately asked. It felt like this question could be crucial.

Durin paused, thinking a bit. "It... depends."

Daniel crossed his arms, tapping one foot. "If I'm going to tag along with a Scout Team, I will need to know what we're fighting against."

Durin sighed. "True... It's just a bit... complicated."

"How so?" Daniel asked impatiently.

"Oh, it changes all the time. Sometimes it's elves, sometimes dwarfs, sometimes the mushmen... And Scouts travel through uninhabited areas where beasts and other unfriendly creatures linger."

"Sounds like your kind has many enemies..."

Durin smiled awkwardly.

"It's best if you let the Scouts explain the details..."

"Fine, then I'll ask them later. But I get the basic idea."

Daniel rolled up his sleeves. "Let's try this 'spell'." He inspected the page in his hands, took a deep breath and shouted the words written before him: "Ignis pila!"

The spell activated and the letters on the paper began to glow again. Heat accumulated and a fireball formed in front of Daniel.

"Oh, it worked..." Surprised he turned towards Durin and the flame started staggering.

"Careful! Don't get distracted mid-spell. Try directing it at something via hand movement." The fairy made a gesture, opening and closing his hand while he pointed at a makeshift practice target that hanged on a branch next to the platform.

"If you say so..." Daniel raised his hand and copied the gesture. The fire ball slowly followed his movement. "This needs a bit of training but it's not too difficult. Though it would be easier with a wand... that's unfortunately not very compatible with spell pages."

"I see, so..." Daniel wanted to ask something but a loud screeching followed by the sound of ringing bells interrupted him.

The deep sound echoed through the tree tops and the birds took flight, fleeing the scene.

"What- What's going on now??"

"A griffin attack! Quick, hide behind the boxes!"

Kapitel 5: Griffin Attack

Durin pushed Daniel toward a bunch of wooden crates that were stacked on the side of the platform next to the recording circle.

"Griffins??" Daniel did as he was told.

"You know, the winged cats... Just stay here."

Durin hurried into the tree, grabbed a sword and readied his wand, then he took off, flying up above the tree tops.

Daniel risked a peek from behind the boxes while still keeping a tight grip on the magic page with the fire ball spell. A group of armed fairies dispatched from a neighbouring tree and hurried into the same direction as the Alchemist. Shortly after they disappeared, the sound of the ringing bells stopped and was instead replaced with battle sounds.

Curious as he was, Daniel wondered what griffins would look like. And as soon as he finished that thought, a griffin crashed through the the branches above him and landed almost directly next to him, missing him by only a few inches. It was a mighty, grey beast, the size and looks of a lion but with the head of an eagle, large wings and a feathered, long tail. The griffin laid there unconscious from the fall but still breathing. On its side it was wounded, loosing quite an amount of silver blood. Daniel was stunned by the animal as he had never seen anything like it before. The last time he encountered a lion was in the zoo and that was decades ago. Soon, the griffin gained its consciousness again and tried to get up.

He had to think fast now! Should he try to run to the door to his right and escape before it noticed him or should he stay quiet and hide behind the boxes? Approaching it didn't even cross his mind. Instead he just stood there, frozen in place, unable to move as his thought ran amok.

The griffin's tail twitched. The beast head turned around, tilting to the side and inspecting the creature beside him. It growled deeply. Daniel didn't dare to make a move, not even to breathe, staring back at it. Right into the griffin's dark brown eyes which studied him intensely.

"Calm down, ok? I don't want to harm you..."

The animal opened its beak and let out a nerve breaking scream, so loud that Daniel almost fell over. He started panicking and promptly used the fire spell which formed in front of him, putting a barrier between him and the beast.

The griffin spread his wings aggressively. It tried to stand but the wound prevented it. With a hissing sound it snapped at the human, while blocking the flames with its wings. Daniel barely evaded, hiding behind the wooden boxes again, trying to put something, anything between them. The upset animal lashed out with its tail, hitting the crates and sweeping them away.

Then it jumped forward to bite him but suddenly it froze, only inches away from Daniel's face.

A shining ray of light had dropped down from above as a golden, sparkling spear ran through the griffin's body, piercing its heart. With a whimpering, coughing sound the

beast shivered one last time and life left its eyes.

Daniel sank onto his knees, now the shock took its toll on him.

"Are you alright?"

A slender fairy in a long white dress covered by a golden armour flew down and retrieved the spear. She had bronze-coloured hair, braided to a strict up-do.

Daniel hesitantly stood up.

"Yes, more or less... Thank you, you saved me."

The fairy who could now see the human in his full size gasped and immediately pointed her weapon at him.

"What happened to your wings??"

As she came closer, the alerted expression on her face changed to a mix of disgust and fear.

"No... I don't recognize your face..."

Who- No... What are you?!"

Daniel felt like the most despicable thing on earth when he saw how she looked at him. Slowly, he raised his hands, trying to calm her down.

"I'm... new here. I'm an acquaintance of Florette and Durin. He brought me here."

The fairy raised her brows while neither letting her guard, nor her spear down.

"You know Durin? Are you a strange creation from this lab? I don't sense any magic from you..."

"I'm not a creation... Do I really look that strange to you?"

"Now that you say it... You look a bit like an elven miscarriage. Without the pointy ears."

Daniel grumbled. "I've heard something similar that before... You're just like Fay..."

"You know Faylenn, too?? And more importantly, how are you so close with each other that you can call him by his nickname already??"

She angrily waved the spear in front of his nose.

"Sorry, did I hit a nerve? Are you jealous?"

"Jealous? Me? No way! A Royal Guard doesn't have such emotions! Anyway! You should be grateful that I saved you!" She gave him a criticising look.

"So... Where's Durin now?"

Daniel pointed up.

"Hmph. I'm gonna ask him about you. You stay here!"

She retracted her spear and rushed to the tree tops, disappearing as fast as she came.

'It's not like I can fly off anywhere like you can...' He shook his head and inspected the dead griffin. The mighty beast laid on its side. He brushed through the soft fur and the feathers. There was still some leftover warmth in them. For some reason he was reminded of Midas, his dog which was waiting for him at home.

Kapitel 6: The Royal Guards are just doing their job

Behind him two fairies landed on the platform. It was Durin and the one from before. "Good, you stayed here. I just confirmed it. So, you weren't lying after all. You were pretty lucky though. If I hadn't been there at that time, the griffin could have bitten you to death. I wonder what got into them. Usually, they don't attack settlements..." She nodded while Durin stepped forward. "Sorry for leaving you alone all of a sudden...! A griffin attack can be disastrous. I wonder what got into them..." He pointed at the fairy in the golden armour. "By the way, this is Dulcina, leader of the Royal Guard."

She saluted. "Pleasure to meet you, human. I apologize for doubting you earlier. You may be our guest for the time being."

"Thanks, I'm Daniel. And I don't intent to stay for long anyway."

"Should we introduce him to everyone? It could prevent more misunderstandings." Durin asked Dulcina but she shook her head. "No. The appearance of an extinct creature could cause a mass panic among the people. If you need to keep him here, I think it would be best to disguise him as an elf. We'd have to cover his eyes though. They stick out too much."

Dulcina smiled innocently at Durin. "But I'm sure, you'll figure something out, right? Honoured Court Alchemist?"

Durin reluctantly smirked back. "Of course, Lady Dulcina... I have the right equipment to... fix his appearance." Daniel's eye twitched. Did they just indirectly call him ugly?

"Well then, come along." Durin waved his hand and they went through the door in the tree bark. On the other side there was a chamber that looked much like laboratory. A row of glasses in different shapes and sizes filled with strange liquids in all possible colours was lined on some boards on the wall.

In the middle of the room a bowl with water was placed on a decorative table. Above everything a huge net made of moss and glowing vines covered the ceiling and illuminated the room with a soft, greenish glimmer as soon as they entered.

Durin snapped his fingers and a closet in the back opened itself. "Hm, let's see... How about this amulet?" He took out a golden necklace that had a charm with a purple gem attached.

"If you wear this, you will be surrounded by illusion magic. It will hide your true identity and give you the appearance of an ordinary passerby." He gave it to Daniel.

Dulcina nodded happily. "That's perfect! I knew, you always have a solution for everything. I'm impressed!" Durin turned away shyly. "You give me too much credit... I could have never made this without you who lead the expedition to the gem mines and, of course, Fay's help with the spell adjustments." Dulcina smiled.

"You're too humble. You deserve so much more. If I could just get through to her Majesty-..."

They both stared down quietly.

Daniel felt uncomfortable with the awkward silence, so he broke it with a question: "I've heard about your Queen before... but what's wrong with her? Is she sick?"

Dulcina's smile faded away. "Oh, she's not physically sick. It's just... Ever since her husband died, she doesn't seem like herself. She doesn't eat properly, her hair turned ashen grey and nothing can cheer her up any more. Unfortunately, she's also neglecting her duties as a Queen...

If this continues, I fear our kingdom may soon collapse."

Durin patted her shoulder. "We're all trying our best to prevent that. Besides, the nominations for the next heir are proceeding well. Soon, we can elect the next Vice King. And that will hopefully stabilize the situation and take a bit of her burdens away."

The Guard fairy nodded. "Yes, someone has to do it after all. I just wish her smile would come back one day..." "The time will come. Especially since you yourself are the most promising candidate for the position. It may be good for the Queen to have someone reliable by her side who truly loves her and is also a competent leader." Dulcina smiled sadly. "Oh, now you're being too flattering..." Durin smiled back at her.

From outside someone was calling. Another guard fairy knocked at the door.

"Excuse me, is Lady Dulcina here? We need you at the Southern gate!" Dulcina flew toward the door. "Alright. Take care of the human, Durin. I have to back to work. Duty calls!"

"Sure, don't worry too much." Durin waved her goodbye as she rushed out in a hurry. "She's a splendid Royal Guard fairy. Honourable, reliable, hard working and to top it off, quite beautiful..."

Daniel smirked. "So you like her?"

The fairies ears turned red. "Wha-? Me? What makes you think that? Anyway, why don't you try on the amulet? I need to see if it works properly!" Daniel laughed. "Alright, I get it."

He put on the necklace and the gemstone flickered a bit.

"Hm... I don't see a difference?"

"Yes, but it works. Look at your reflection."

Durin pointed at a water basin in the middle of the room. Daniel could see himself in the water: His hair had turned darker, his eyes were now green and his ears had become long and pointy. He reached out to his ears, touching them but he felt no difference. What he felt and what he saw was not the same.

Durin flew around the human and inspected what he saw. "It's amazing, right? Illusion magic can be really confusing. It can make ugly people beautiful and beautiful people ugly. If I didn't know better, I'd think you were a real elf."

Daniel shook his head. "I'll take that as a compliment... With this at least people won't stare at me like they're seeing a ghost and call me an elven miscarriage...." He paused shortly. "By the way, that Dulcina from before... I heard her mention that humans are extinct in this world. Is that true? Are there absolutely no humans here? Why did they disappear?"

Durin hesitated.

"Good question. We don't know much about humans, only a few ancient scriptures that mention trading connections with humans remain. Maybe you could help us find out more about your kind..." The fairy seemed to be lost in thoughts.

"It would be amazing to discover all the mysteries that are buried in the past. Are you sure you don't want to stay here a bit longer?"

"Yes, I'm certain. I have a cute girlfriend at home, you know." That answer came immediately.

Durin sighed. "Well, that's too bad... -I mean good for you."

He collected a few pages from a large, wooden register. "Hm, since you insist... I'm going to make a custom spell book for you, so you can come back from that journey unharmed. Fay will give you a list of materials to collect and Borck can give you all the other equipment you'll need. He's the leader of the Scout fairies, just so you know. I'm sure, he'll be happy to have a new travel companion to talk to. And believe me, he talks a lot. Mostly about trivial topics though."

He stacked up the pages on the table. "I'm gonna need a bit time to sort and assemble this, so let me send you to the Scout headquarters first. Maybe you'll meet Florette there again."

They left the laboratory and headed to the mushroom platform. Daniel wrinkled his eyebrows. "We'll fly again?"

"But of course. The only way to get around here is by flying." Durin smiled.

"Though for your sake, we'll do something different this time."

He drew his wand and pointed at a large leaf, the size of a small car, which promptly fell from the tree and landed in front of Daniel.

"Hop on, I'll fly you."

Kapitel 7: Scout Fairies

They took off together and soared high above the tree tops. Daniel grabbed the sides of the leaf tightly. If he fell off from here, it would be a long, very long fall... He couldn't even see the ground any more. But then he looked up and it was a stunning view from here. The swaying leaves looked like an ocean and the fresh air breeze carried the scent of the forest and a hint of sweetness that reminded him of his girlfriends flower garden. Within the vast green sea a huge flower had grown above all other trees, crowned by a ring of massive, white petals.

"What on earth is that? A monster flower?"

Durin laughed.

"No, this flower isn't a monster though the name gerbera cultivaris monstera does imply it. It's a rare ancient flower type that took roots here millenniums ago. Today it serves as the Scout headquarter."

They flew closer to it. Daniel could see a lot of fairy groups heading in and out of the flower head and holes in its stem. The place was crawling with busy fairies like bees in a beehive. Some of them carried stretchers with injured fairies, others transported griffin corpses away.

The largest flower petals were used as runways. Durin steered the leaf toward one of them and they landed safely. Daniel gladly got off, with shaking knees, but happy to have solid ground under his feet again.

"Oh, my goddess! Dury!! Are you alright??" An orange lightning passed by him and stopped abruptly before the alchemist. "I saw the griffin corpse on your doorstep! Did he attack you? I was so worried because I couldn't find you anywhere! I thought maybe you were eaten by one of these beasts!" A small, orange-haired fairy with pilot goggles grabbed Durin by his shoulders and shook him, almost violently.

"I'm fine, I'm fine! Calm down, Borck... I'm gonna get sick if you shake me too much..." He tried to get out of his tight grip in vain without being too impolite.

"Oh, oh! Sorry! Dury, I'm so sorry! I'm just glad you are alright! We really, really need your help with the spell books. We used up a lot of the healing spells after the griffin attack and now our supplies have almost run out! I'd say we'd be lost without you! Even doomed! I wish we had more magicians here..." The fairy threw his hands in the air and made some wild gestures while talking.

Then he noticed Daniel and turned around to him.

"And who are you? An elven visitor? Or a helping hand? Or... Oh! A prisoner of war?? Why wasn't I informed about that!" He flew closer to Daniel's face, then he paused.

"Ah, the glasses, I forgot to take off my glasses..." He removed his goggles, revealing big, golden eyes and freckled cheeks.

"Hi! I'm Borck. Nice to meet you, elf! What brings you here out of all places?" The illusion magic seemed to work perfectly on him, since he couldn't recognize Daniel as a human.

"Well, I'm Daniel and I'm actually-" Durin got between them. "He's indeed an elf, visiting us. Fay needs to collect a few special materials and this kind elf has offered his help because... he's an old acquaintance of mine. He just has a bit of a complicated history, so he doesn't know much about this world. Please, be considerate about

that."

Borck nodded. "Hm, alright. If you say so, Dury. I can show the newbie the ropes! I'm the royally acknowledged leader of the Scouts and I know everything there is to know about scouting. I also train new recruits and organize expeditions. Because I know almost every corner of this world, I can track down any material needed." He grinned proudly, lifting himself up a bit without noticing. He then continued to ramble on about his various skills and adventures while Durin dusted off his shoulders where Borck shook him.

"I leave him in your care then. I still have to prepare a few things for this expedition, so show him around a bit 'till I'm back."

"Sure thing, Dury! You can leave everything to me. I'm an expert in teaching stuff!"

"Good, I'm trusting you. See you!" Durin took off.

"So, you want to go on an expedition? Where to? Have you ever scouted before? What's your current experience? Which weapons do you use?"

Daniel shook his head. "One question after the other please. I just arrived here. To be honest, I don't even know which materials we're looking for."

"I see, I see. That's not a problem. We have a pin board in the great hall where all expeditions and delivery dates are listed. I'll just look for Fays request. Follow me!"

He flew toward the middle of the flower and entered a golden dome through one of many tall portals. Inside everything was coloured in a soft, yellow light that came from the long entrances which lead to the runways. Big blue and red bell flowers were mounted on the ceiling. They signalled if the path was clear or occupied. In the middle of the dome, a large hive was hanging in mid-air. Fairies flew in and out, carrying letters and packages back and forth.

Brock went straight to a counter directly under the hive. A female fairy dressed in a lavender gown and half-transparent purplish wings greeted him. "Greetings, Borck! Are you going out? We're almost out of armour scales."

"Hi, Vio! I'm kinda busy right now but I'll see what I can do. Team 31 should be coming back from Oceania soon. If you're lucky, they brought some along." She dropped her wings slightly.

"Oh, well. It's not too urgent yet. I don't want to disturb you when you're busy... Does your current job have something to do with that elf behind you?" She curiously pointed at Daniel.

"Yes, partially. This is... Daniel, was it? And this is Violetta, our jewellery maker." Borck nodded proudly. "Dury entrusted me with his guidance. We'll go scouting together on Faylenn's request. We were just about to get the list of materials."

He wandered toward a pin board while talking. Violetta followed him.

"For Faylenn? It must be very important then... But he always asks for such rare, strange and hard to get things. I know, he is the Court Magician but some things are really unreasonable."

"You mean the deepwater mermaid tears he requested last winter?"

Borck scanned the request board.

"Yes. And that's just one example..."

"Yeah, they're impossible to get and we still don't have them. We couldn't even get normal mermaid tears as a substitute..."

Daniel listened uncomfortably, praying that the materials for the teleporter machine would be easier to get.