

Engelian Adventures: Transformations

Book 1: Transgressions

Chapter 19

by

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Chapter 19

Thinking that the Learned Academy would appreciate the findings of his study, he presented his book to those worthies. This was his downfall. They did not agree with his findings and since he had neglected his formal studies he was found wanting as a student and denied the right to call himself Wizard by the Academy. A short time later Wamzut left Gunde in search of other, friendlier places to live and Engle is a better place for his coming.

The Life Story of Wamzut by Fareld Minton.

I left Nessa to compose herself while I changed into Attina's clothes. They were better suited for the amount of travelling I foresaw myself doing in the next couple of hours. To protect Sarina's reputation I placed the circlet of illusion in the travelling chest with the rest of my belongings. While I was there I took out my component's satchel. Almost ready, I went back to where Nessa still stared blankly at the wall.

"Nessa, listen to me. I am going to call up some magickal assistance. Do you understand?" She nodded vaguely still lost in misery and not really aware of what was happening. Having someone die by your own hand when you had spent your entire life caring for the sick and injured must be a shattering experience. I prayed it wouldn't scar her for the rest of her life.

I went to the window and removed my silver penny whistle from my satchel. It was several minutes of repeating the call over and over again before a wind picked up and I heard a whisper in my ear.

"Wamzut, what doest thou wish of me?" It seemed that Hhaah was in a hurry.

"Hhaah, I and another human have need of urgent transportation. Are you available?" I waited breathlessly with the wind whipping my hair wildly about my head.

"Yes, Wamzut. Where doest thou wish to go?"

I sighed with relief, my plans all hinged on Hhaah's assistance.

"To the sea and then down the coast. I will direct you. Please wait one moment." I put the whistle in my satchel and stuffed it deep inside my clothing before going over to where Nessa still sat at the table. She was looking at me in a confused manner, which was hardly surprising as Hhaah's wind was blowing small things about the room.

"Nessa! Snap out of it," I said. "It was an accident. It was not your fault."

I took up the bag holding her belongings and placed them also into my travelling chest. The psychic connections I were concerned about were those that Milos would have access to back at temple. These items, though incriminating, should be safe enough here. I would take them with me tomorrow. I locked the chest and secured it further with magick hoping that no one would pry into it while I was away. Then I pulled her to her feet and led her to the window.

"What is going on?" she asked.

"You are about to have the ride of your life." I took her into my arms. "Whatever happens, try not to scream. I would prefer people not to see us leave," I then turned and spoke out the window. "Hhaah! We are ready. Please try not to dash us to pieces against the buildings."

With that, we were lifted out of the room. Nessa screamed and clung to me and I could hardly blame her, for we came perilously close to the overhanging roof. However, once above the rooftops the ride became less dangerous though no less hair-raising as we were swept in the direction of

the sea. I shouted to Hhaah to go south along the coast and we swept off in that direction at speed.

This form of flight is incredibly chaotic for heavier than air travellers. There is an incredible amount of noise and everything loose about your person is trying to beat you to your destination. Nessa held on tight, kept her eyes closed and refused to look, which was a pity, because flying in any form gives you a completely new perspective on the world.

Our destination was a village about ten miles down the coast; it was the home of an old enemy of mine, Wilf. Originally, he had been a Shaman from the cold north who arrived in Engle aboard an Angolorian raider some fifteen years back. The Angolorians had been intent on attacking the isolated businesses and holdings on the seaward side of Ilbarsis and carrying off any loot they could grab before the town's defences could react. Wilf had been their magickal guide and protector and in this duty he had been found wanting.

Disgraced by his failure against me, Wilf had been thrown off the ship, which had then sailed off to find easier pickings. This had suited Wilf just fine. He was not naturally war-like and found the climate here in Engle more to his liking than frozen Angolor. With my help he had since established himself in the small fishing village of Awash as a healer and sea magus and I had started purchasing certain magickal simples from him when I had become too old to gather them myself. I'd heard in recent years he had married and even had children, though I had yet to meet his family.

At the speed we were travelling, it was only a few minutes before the small bay, in which Awash lay, came into view. I shouted for Hhaah to put us down a little distance from the village then overpaid him for his services with some of the potpourri from my satchel.

"You have interesting friends," said Nessa with a smile after Hhaah left us.

It appeared our wild ride had blown her out of her misery. I smiled back and slung my satchel over my shoulder then ran my fingers through my hair, trying to return it and myself to some semblance of order.

"He seemed to be in something of a hurry tonight. Still I doubt Loremaster Milos will find you now."

In the distance I could see a few lights. I doubted that Wilf would be asleep, considering our mode of travel, however fisher-folk tend to be early to bed and early to rise, so I was hoping that our arrival had gone unnoticed by the rest of the village. I pointed and said, "Come along. I would like you to meet someone."

As we walked down the beach, I explained my plans. How I would catch the ship I had already booked passage on, so that we would have our belongings with us when we reached Constantine. How I was going to arrange for her to stay here overnight and have her join the ship when it sailed past in the morning. My trip to Constantine was news to Nessa as I had not yet had the chance to tell her of it. I expected some surprise at its suddenness, but she accepted it without comment. I suspect that, for the moment, this all felt like a dream and she was happy to just go along with it as it would take her away from Ilbarsis and her troubles.

The half moon provided enough light for Attina's eyes to guide us across the uneven ground and we tried our best to be quiet, however, we were soon detected by the dogs of the village. They barked noisily for a moment before being quieted by a single piercing whistle. The village seemed to me to be anything but sleepy any more.

Wilf's cottage was one of the most northerly and as we approached it a door opened and I saw, silhouetted against the orange light of a fire within,

the figure of a tall man holding a staff. My mage sight confirmed that this was most likely Wilf and that his stick was more than it seemed.

"Come no closer, sorcerer," called the thickly-accented voice. We stopped as directed. "Who are you to command the spirits of the wind in such a manner? And why have you come here, to *my* village, in the middle of the night?"

I was not surprised that he had sensed our arrival. Although generally not very powerful, the Shamanistic tradition involves their becoming intimately involved with local nature spirits. No doubt one of Wilf's familiars had informed him of our approach. He would be fully prepared to defend his home if needs be, so I would have to be careful with my explanations as we needed his co-operation.

"Good evening, good sir," I replied. "Forgive us the lateness of our arrival but circumstances forced on us both the time and manner of our travel. We have recently quit the township of Ilbarsis and this house was recommended to me as a place of safety. If we are not welcome, we will travel on and find some other place to rest."

"May I have your names and the name of the one who spoke well of me?" challenged Wilf, still wary.

"My name is Attina. My travelling companion is Nessa. If you be called Wilf, you were recommended to us by the one called Wamzut."

"I had heard the Wizard had passed on. Do you speak with the dead?"

"Nay, but they sometimes speak to me," I said, putting a different slant on the matter. Speaking with the dead is frowned upon in most societies however, a benign visitation from beyond the grave is generally seen in a completely different light.

While he cogitated on this I pleaded my case, "Noble shaman, my companion is in need of a place to stay the night and a short ride in a boat to

meet a ship that will be passing this way tomorrow. Will you aid us? I have other tidings that may make it worth your while."

"Go on," he said.

"Wamzut bought magickal simples from you, did he not?" He nodded his answer. "I represent the Wizard's replacement at the court of Lord Vead, a woman named Sarina. She is a Gundian Seer and she will also be in need of such goods. If you will aide us this night, I will put in a good word for you with her so that such an arrangement might continue. What say you?"

He thought for a while and then spoke. "There are things here I do not understand and I suspect much that is unsaid, however you come in peace and are in need, so the tradition is that I should not turn you away." He gestured for us to enter. "Come in by the fire where we can discuss these matters in private."

He led us inside and placed his staff by the door next to the family's collection of boots and fishing poles. He then introduced us to his family who initially stared at me as if I had two heads instead of pointed ears.

Wilf is tall, even for an Angolorian. Head and shoulders above Attina in height, he is in his forties and his blond hair, which he wears tied back, has started to recede as if it were being pulled back by the weight of the long tresses that hang to the middle of his back. He has amazingly blue eyes and a stubble of beard on his chin.

His wife is his opposite: Stemian, with short dark of hair, she is plump and has lots of smile wrinkles around her eyes. Wilf introduced her as Nana and she introduced their two young children: blond Wilfson and the dark-haired Siara, both of whom were then chivvied off back to their beds.

From the moment that Wilf announced that we were visitors and that one of us might be staying, Nana took over proceedings and bade us sit by the fire while she prepared char from a steaming kettle on the fireplace. She

asked whether we had eaten and when we said that we had not, she put together a simple meal of oily fish and bread for us.

Wilfson and Siara kept brazenly peeking at me from behind a curtain. Apparently, pointy-eared visitors were an uncommon occurrence, as no amount of Nana's scolding would keep them in their beds. Meanwhile Wilf kept me involved in conversation. He asked many questions concerning the passing of Wamzut and the coming of Sarina.

Eventually Nana yawned and this was taken as a general signal that it was well past time that everyone should be in bed and asleep. She offered us the master bed. I refused, saying that I would not be staying; I still had things to do before morning. Nessa would also not hear of taking their bed and said she would be happy with a blanket by the fire. Before leaving I took Nessa outside to reassure her that if all went well, I would see her soon onboard ship and we would be safe on our way south to Constantine. Once again she said nothing, accepting whatever I said. This placidity was a concern to me and I hoped that some sleep would bring her out of it. Then, conscious of our surroundings, I gave her a very quick good-bye kiss and let her go back inside to sort out sleeping arrangements with Nana.

Wilf then joined me outside and I said, "Thank you, Master Wilf, for your hospitality. Now, if you will, I would like to tell you about the arrangements for tomorrow."

"Go on," he said simply.

"Tomorrow about midday a south-bound ship will come close to shore at this point to pick up Nessa. If you could arrange to get her out to deeper water, I am sure the Captain will be much happier than if he has to come in close to shore. My mistress will be on board. You will have the chance to meet her then."

He shrugged, "Done and done but what if the ship does not come to shore or this Sarina is not aboard?"

"Well, then it will be up to Nessa to decide. She is a sensible girl and I am sure she would not want to inconvenience you or your family in any way."

He nodded and then mused, "Yes, she seems straight up and I will see she is kept safe. You are the one that interests me. There is something about you that does not sit right with me, besides your fey appearance. It is as though I have met you before but I am sure I have not."

I smiled. "Something to think about Master Wilf. But now I must go. I have a long way to travel before I can sleep this night." With that I headed off, walking northward along the beach in the direction of Ilbarsis.

"I shall indeed ponder the mystery of the Alfaren sorceress who has visitations from dead Wizards. Fair thee well."

He stayed and watched me for a long time. Despite his suspicions about me, I was glad that Nessa was in his care, for I knew he would look after her now that she had broken bread with him under his own roof.

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