

# **Engelian Adventures: Transformations**

## **Book 2: Transitions**

### **Chapter 1**

**by**

**Phillip Berrie**

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## Chapter 1

It was my first cold beer for over forty years. The chill Mexican brew was not to my taste — I had become accustomed to the heady taste of the warm ales of my home in Engle — but that was not the point. I had achieved my immediate goals and the beer plus the little packets of peanuts and pretzels scattered before me on the Formica tabletop were part of my reward. And this meagre fair was not the best part. More importantly, the small three-room cabin with its fly screened windows and doors would provide me with shelter for the night and protection from the damnable mosquitoes.

I scratched one of the itchy spots on my nicely-turned ankles and cursed mosquitoes in general. Didn't the little blighters know that they wouldn't like my Alfaren blood? I rubbed on some more cream from the tube of medication I'd found in the bathroom cabinet and hoped the itching would stop soon. I'd been at their mercy all afternoon as I'd made my way through the lush vegetation around the outskirts of Nicholls Town to this sleepy little resort hotel with its suitably isolated cabins. Now I was inside, safe and, if I was quiet, would hopefully remain so until morning; a generator chugged away somewhere in the distance providing electricity for the resort and the proprietors had been kind enough to leave the power on in this unoccupied cabin.

Much to my chagrin I'd been forced to use magick to open the bottle, a search of the tiny kitchenette having produced no bottle opener. The sight of the tiny screw threads etched into the glass lip of the beer bottle had been a sobering reminder that, like bottle openers, I was a thing

of the past here on Earth. No doubt lots of other things had changed since I had been here last.

Then again, so had I.

A chance glance in a mirror would still have me turning back to stare at Attina's decidedly feminine face. The over-large green eyes in the broad-cheeked, caramel-coloured face and the pointed ears that peeked from underneath the blond hair were still new to me. Some people found these features highly attractive, others thought my looks disturbingly fey. I just kept expecting to see a white beard and moustache on a face wrinkled with age and experience.

To make matters worse, I was beginning to suspect that the partial memories of my host's body and her half-Alfaren, but fully female, hormones were changing me in subtle ways — I was no longer the Wizard that I was.

Oh well, any port in the storm, as they say.

And, the last twenty-four hours had certainly been tempestuous. Yesterday, I'd been in Engle, Constantine to be exact. Now, I was here, on Earth of all places, sitting on a chromed-metal kitchen chair in a darkened resort cabin on Andros Island in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas watching as night descended over the hotel's small marina.

I'd gone from being a visiting magus at the School of Occult Studies to 'Catch of the Day' for Captain Henderson and his crew of the trawler *Lady Luck* when they'd fished me out of the foggy waters of the Bermuda Triangle, this morning, their time.

I'd feigned amnesia and then added to the mystery of my rescue by disappearing from his vessel at dockside on Andros. After all, I could hardly have told him, or the waiting press, that Arion — the Engelian God of Magick — had thrown me through a rift in space to exile me here while he decided what to do with me.

Arion had made a mistake though. His prison, the low magick world of exile from which he thought I could not escape, was actually the world of my birth and I knew it was indeed possible to breach the inter-dimensional barriers here. I had done so once already and that was even before I'd become a sorcerer.

True, it would be difficult. I was homeless, penniless and on the opposite side of the planet from where I knew the barriers to be weakest but there were people depending on me back in Engle and I definitely had no inclination to stay here.

This was the world I had left forty years ago convinced that it was on the brink of destruction and despite the evidence its survival — this close to Cuba the signs of a nuclear exchange between the US and the USSR would have been readily, if not fatally, apparent — I had now made my home elsewhere.

Things had changed though, like the beer bottle, everything was familiar yet slightly different. At least that was how it was in this remote outpost. I could only guess at what changes technology had brought about in the more civilised parts of the world.

To redress this gap in my knowledge I decided to find out more about the current state of the world. The cabin had a device that reminded

me of the television sets I remembered and, after moving it so that its light would not be seen from outside, I eventually worked out how to turn it on. There were none of the rotary switches and variable resistors that I remembered. Everything was done with push buttons and I was amused to see that there were no words for the buttons, their functionality being represented by rune-like symbols.

Eventually, I got an image on the screen and was dazzled by the vibrant colours. It was like having cinemascope projector in your own home. Up close though, I could see that the quality of the image was still inferior to an optical film projector and that the underlying technology hadn't changed significantly from what I remembered.

There were a large number of channels showing mainly American programmes and as I changed the channels I saw everything from explicit bedroom scenes to Disney-like children's animations all being televised at the same hour of the day, much to my surprise.

Then I found a channel that apparently showed the News continually and I found out just how bad things had got with the world.

First up was a report about how the United States and my own country, Britain — who had apparently both invaded a small Arabic nation — were now fighting a battle against people who were so desperate that they were willing to blow themselves up to prove their point. Even in the worst of times in my day, things hadn't been that bad.

Becoming more and more depressed I watched war reportage, business news and other sordid events of many different types unfold on the screen for a number of hours.

The most disturbing thing about all this was that these events were being telecast live into people's homes so they could watch them as they happened, like some strange form of entertainment. Surely one of the outcomes of this would be that people would become inured and lose their sense of shock and outrage at such events. Had humankind been reduced to such an unfeeling state while I had been gone?

It was full night when I turned the television off and let the darkness of the room enshroud me in its gloom. My eyes adapted to the darkness, but there was a greater darkness within me that I knew would not let me sleep unaided so I walked over to the kitchenette and sought out the smaller bottles I had resisted earlier. I needed the release of the spirits they contained and after a little coughing fit — Attina's palate was not as accustomed to hard liquor as Wamzut's had been — drained the contents of several of the bottles. It had been a long day and I needed it to end in some deep dreamless sleep.

In the bedroom I took off my top layer of clothes. I had to be careful not to disturb the dressing on the wound that Jesus had placed there as part of his first aid ministering onboard the *Lady Luck*. The last thing I needed was to have it start bleeding again.

The wound had been inflicted by Seeker Harlan — a stuck-up, sword-wielding magus from the temple of Mithra in Engle — who I'd been trying to mesmerise at the time. I'd survived the battle, just, but the shallow gouge across my ribs had bled in three different realities now and had been treated with three different types of care: an apothecary's potion and stitches by Simad in Engle, the healing saliva of the alien healer Semblor inside the strange gigantic beast where the god Arion holds court,

and first aid and antibiotics of the Spaniard Jesus onboard the *Lady Luck*. And I'd had enough of it. I just wanted it healed.

Naked, bar underpants and my bandage I examined the wound in a mirror affixed to the bedroom wall. Semblor's healing had gone a long way to healing the wound, but it had reopened during my time in the sea and Jesus, the crewman who'd resuscitated me, had also applied a bandage to keep it clean. Sometime soon I would have to get his dressing changed, which would be tricky. It was not something I could do myself and would require explanations.

Still that was a problem for tomorrow. I lay down on the large bed and allowed myself to drift off under the effects of the alcohol.

*He came to me in our special place and took me in his rough-and-tumble way. It felt good to have him inside me again after so long and I clung to him desperately not wanting to lose him again.*

I woke with a start. My body covered in tropical sweat and tangled sheet, my mind still reeling from the vision and the alcohol. The dream had shaken me badly, for although I had experienced it fully, it had not been mine.

Yes, I knew who the man was. He was Attina's dead husband, but there was no way that I would want to have sexual relations with him. It must be the alcohol allowing Attina's memories to influence my dreams.

It should have been Nessa that I dreamt of. She was ... had been ... my lover. Tears came to my eyes as I remembered her perfidy. How she had run away and left evidence that damned me for a crime that she had

committed. I let the tears flow and sobbed into my pillow until, under the influence of alcohol, I fell asleep again.

I woke again some time later with a start. There had been a sound. For a moment I lay there, disoriented, and then lights came on in the living area. Something clattered to the linoleum floor in the kitchenette and I heard someone say, "No thanks Bobby. I've been up since six this morning. I'm gonna hit the sack."

Damn! A late arrival. No wonder the power had been left on.

The man, an American by his accent, called out, "Five o'clock start tomorrow, guys. I want to get into those Boneys as soon as possible."

According to the signs I'd seen in town, Andros Island was the Bone fishing capital of the world and a Mecca for sports fishermen.

Well this fisherman was about to catch more than he'd bargained for. As he finished saying goodnight to his companions I slipped out of bed and moved to stand just inside the doorway of the still darkened bedroom. As I stood there I became very conscious that apart from my bandage the only clothing I wore was a pair of baggy 'Y' fronts rustled up from somewhere by one of the crew of the *Lady Luck*.

"Well room service sure has gone to pot. What a mess." I heard him moving something about and then he spoke again, "Stuff it! I'll do it in the morning. It's bedtime for this little black duck."

He came into the doorway his hand reaching out for the light switch and became aware of me just as he turned the lights on. His eyes had just

started to register surprise when they met mine and I sent my willpower surging through that connection. His face immediately lost all expression and I reached out and taking him by the hand directed him to the bed.

My mesmerism spell is a powerful part of my sorcerous arsenal. I have a strong will and the spell relies mostly on psychic strength than magick. In this magick poor world I would probably be using it a lot, I realised.

“You have seen nothing unusual,” I commanded. “You were so tired you simply walked in, lay down on the bed and went to sleep. Now lie down and close your eyes and you will stay asleep until I awake you.”

As he obeyed all I could wonder was, what on Earth was I going to do with him. There was no way I was going to leave the cabin, not at this time of night and mesmerism can only do so much. Somehow, I’d have to weave some sort of story into his life that he’d believe to explain my presence.

I looked down at his sleeping form. I suppose, he would be considered attractive by most women. He looked to be in his thirties, tall and sun-tanned with blond hair. He was wearing blue denim jacket, jeans, garish white and blue plastic-looking shoes with their brand name displayed for all to see and a shoulder holster with a gun.

At first I was not surprised by this, most men carry a weapon in Engle. Then I remembered that this was not true on Earth — at least not the Earth I knew. Had it changed so much that carrying a weapon was now commonplace, or was this man more than a common fisherman?

I would have to ask him later, but first things first. I went into the living room and turned off the light. Then, favouring my uninjured side, I dragged the luggage that I found there into the bedroom so I could ransack it in the light.

His clothing was a little large for me, but was eminently more comfortable than the rough seaman's kit I had been wearing and so I was soon attired in a loose fitting white t-shirt and some sort of pants made of a soft green material with a white stripe down the sides that had elastic at both the waist and ankles. An intriguing find had been the several pairs of underpants that fitted me much better than the baggy ones I had been wearing. They must have been extremely constricting on their much larger owner.

Further investigation of his luggage revealed: fishing equipment, a pair of dark glasses, a thick paperback novel about dragons of all things, and a strange metallic device with associated wires, which I set aside for later investigation. I had also found on the table in the eating area a clipboard that held maps of what must be the local area and some loose printed pages that after some thought I decided could only be an aircraft's flight plan.

Surely I couldn't be this lucky.

I moved over to the sleeping man and searched him removing gun, wallet, keys and a small silver device with a flap that concealed many buttons. A quick look in the wallet revealed that the owner, one Jonathan Anderson, whose picture matched the face of the man on the bed, was licensed – internationally – to operate both cars and a variety of light

aircraft and was an inhabitant of the city of Nassau in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

This man was my ticket off Andros Island.

All the evidence indicated that he had piloted a light plane here from Nassau. Therefore, if I could maintain my control of him I should be able to have him fly me off the island. The only thing I had to worry about was his fishing companions.

I yawned and decided that to cope with tomorrow I needed more sleep and that now was the best time for that. I put aside the items I had been looking at, turned off the light and lay down on the other side of the bed across from the still sleeping Jonathan Anderson.

I could not afford to oversleep so I primed myself for three hours of deep sleep. This is a skill, akin to autohypnosis, that I had perfected while learning the art of meditation and I was confident that I would awaken after the prescribed period and still have enough time in hand to plan my next move.

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