

# **Engelian Adventures: Transformations**

## **Book 2: Transitions**

### **Chapter 10**

**by**

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## Chapter 10

Several hours later Nessa was still sticking to her plan, but it was not going well. She had managed to open the stiff hatch several finger-widths even though there had been no significant reduction in the number of people in the building below her. She'd taken to timing her efforts with outbreaks of sound from below — apparently the School had quite a few children in its care and their exuberance was noisy. Now however, she had been forced to place herself in one corner of the coop, legs splayed out either side of the hatch, so as to avoid undoing what she had achieved. This awkward position meant she could no longer see down through the hatch, and could now only listen. At least the space below her was dark but she felt vulnerable in this position.

And worse still, she also had to pee.

With all her concerns about water and food she had forgotten her body's other functions. Her condition was getting urgent and she couldn't very well do it here. It was bad enough sitting in pigeon poo let alone her own urine. She also couldn't risk a leak in the roof drawing attention to her hiding place.

An opportunity came when several sets of, presumably young, feet thundered along what must be a corridor somewhere below her. She yanked at the hatch as hard as she could and with a squeal it came unstuck and she was able to push it to the vertical and then lean it against the opposite wall of the coop.

Fortunately, the feet continued on their noisy way and there was no immediate response to her own sound. Grateful, she pulled her feet in and let them dangle down into the space that had opened up below her.

Wooden beams festooned with spider webs defined her view while directly beneath her was a platform set on wooden batons. A set of rungs affixed to the coop's support beams descended to the platform where there was, of all things, a blessed bucket.

Throwing caution to the winds she scrambled down and pulled down her trousers.

Ahh, what blessed relief.

It was now later in the afternoon and her rusty metallic saviour had now become a dirty pariah and been banished to the pigeon coop above. The roof space, which looked like it stretched the length of the building, was dark and stuffy so she'd stayed close to the coop where there was at least some light and a little airflow. Small sounds from the darkness told her that she was not the only living thing that hid here but, as long as they stayed there in the dark, she was happy to be ignorant of just what it was making the noises.

Nessa was both hungry and extremely thirsty, but the occasional sound from the other side of the door at the bottom of the narrow set of stairs that lead down from the platform meant she wouldn't be venturing forth just yet. And this was her main problem at the moment. She was bored.

She'd already cleaned her clothes of as much pigeon muck as possible and packed them all back neatly into her bag. She'd even taken to cleaning the last of the sand from the crevices of the large gold ring she'd stolen from her ex-lover.

Now, she rotated the heavy ring in her hands looking at the strange shapes that formed its circle and wondered how on earth it could possible be a 'library' as Wamzut, the magus inside Tina's head, claimed.

But what was it? Jewellery? It was too large to be a circlet and most likely too rigid to be a necklace. To test this idea she lifted it above her head to slip it on. But as she began to lower it she felt something and stopped.

It was like when she kissed Tina. There was something there she couldn't see. Some invisible presence? Wamzut's magical aura tingled, but this was different. It was like a breeze blowing gently on her scalp. It wasn't unpleasant, but it did make her stop and she looked at the circlet in a new light.

Perhaps there was something to Wamzut's claims. But a library? Libraries were buildings full of scholars, scrolls and books. What in all of Magudonya could he have meant when he called it a library?

Nessa hadn't really taken in much of what he'd said. She'd just been glad to get Tina with her delectable body back from the terrible storm and

the island where her lover had been marooned after apparently saving the *Wayfarer* from the spirits that had been trying to destroy the ship.

At least that is what Wamzut had said. And she couldn't deny that strange things had been going on, but still she had always taken a lot of what the magus said with a grain of salt and kept her reservations about the tales of his unseen world to herself.

Speaking of tales, she remembered now how Wamzut hadn't said much at all about the ring after that first day. Was he trying to hide something from her? Was the ring much more valuable than its weight in gold? Once more she toyed with the idea of putting it over her head. Why? She wasn't sure. Somehow, it just seemed the right thing to do with it.

But then again, why not? After all libraries weren't dangerous, just boring. She brought the ring up again and slipped it over her head and before she could even finish the movement she was somewhere else.

She was in a room, a room with multiple corridors leading off into darkness. Bewildered and a little afraid she turned a circle arriving back at her starting point where there now stood a woman — a black woman — who smiled at her and bowed.

"It has been a long time, Aeda. Welcome back to the Library of Arunz."

Nessa stared dumb-founded at the full-blood Nubian who stood before her. Black people were few and far between this far north in the Sorendenese empire. But who was this 'Aeda' of which she spoke? She turned to check behind her.

"No doubt you have experienced many things since you last visited."

There was no one else in the room. The woman was addressing her.

"Would you care to share your new wisdom?"

"I ... I am ..." she got out before deciding that it might be best to go along with what was happening. The magical creature — as Nessa now decided the woman must be — might not be so friendly if she found out that she wasn't this Aeda person. Wamzut had told her that magical creatures didn't always see the world the same way people did. That must be what was happening. She nodded her head in agreement afraid she might give herself away with her voice.

"Good. Thank you."

And then, suddenly, something was in her head. New awarenesses, like jagged cracks widening in her vision, sprang up around her. Each crack showing places she didn't recognise full of strange people she didn't know that babbled in tongues both archaic and unfamiliar.

Then Nessa's personal awareness was sent reeling by a sudden influx of understanding as she realised that these people and places weren't unknown, that they belonged to people she somehow knew.

Memories not her own began warring with her own inside her head.

Her father was suddenly not only just a Sorendenese farmer, but somehow also a black man and, a king. Her dark-skinned mother whose ornate tomb she had worshipped at had not died in giving birth to her but had married her white-skinned father to raise she and her brothers on the family farm. And, her priestly mentors were somehow both a tall proud black man with second sight — oracle to a lion-headed god — and a short plump Aiedan priestess who loved to tell stories to her novices.

It was too much. She couldn't handle it. She tried to scream and knew not whether she succeeded. Then, unable to cope with the flood of conflicting memories, Nessa's consciousness slipped away.

An unknown time later the woman woke. She was still within the Library. Before her stood a brown-skinned woman, a woman whose face was both familiar and new to her.

"What happened?" she asked.

"You have changed. There were differences we had to resolve."

"Differences ... Who is we?" asked the woman even though she knew the answer.

"We, are the Library of Arunz."

"Why do you look like that?" Once again she knew the answer, but was a little afraid of what she might hear.

"You see your own face and hear your own tongue for your own sense of well being."

"Who am I?" The answer to this question she wasn't so sure about.

"Do you not know?" The woman looked perturbed. "You are Nessa ... Who was Aeda. Which would you prefer me to call you by?"

"I ... I don't know. I am a little confused at the moment. Either will do, I suppose," said the woman.

"Very well. Now, what information do you seek, Aeda?"

"Sorry?"

"What knowledge do you seek? All the knowledge and memories of everyone who has ever used the library is available to you for the asking."

"What has happened to me?" The woman was having trouble sorting out recent events.

"Can you be more specific? Your memories are unusual and cover many years and two worlds," said the Library. "To relate all that has happened to you would take a long time. Your physical body would suffer deprivation."

"What has happened to me since I entered the Library?" snapped the woman.

"Your new body's experiences have been added to the Library. There were older memories missing from it that we replaced. We hope this was as you wished?"

"Yes ... You have done well," said the woman with just a little regret.

"Do you have any further questions?"

"Not at the moment," said Aeda.

"Thank you for adding to the Library of Arunz. You may remove the ring."

Aeda lifted the Library of Arunz over her head and brought it down to look at the now familiar circle of interconnected runes. Then she turned her attention to the light-brown — no longer black — hands that held the ring and wondered what else had changed in her world.

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