





# The Unveiled World

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# The Unveiled World

Robert Ziefel

This is a work of fiction. All the characters, organizations and events portrayed in this novel are either products of the author's imagination, arose through the Demongate High Paragon campaign played by Robert Ziefel and his friends, or are used fictitiously.

The Unveiled World

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*For My Parents*

*Who never stopped believing in me  
Who never stopped pushing me to be the best I could  
Who never stopped loving me*



# The Unveiled World



# 1

## Reminiscing

*“If memories were all I sang, I’d rather drive a truck.”--Rick Nelson*

I notice that I am confused.

It is an odd feeling, and not exactly one I expected as I sat in my room, about to leave and start my second year of school at Demongate High. My room is clean, and what is not already in my dorm lies packed inside my talisman pouch, ready to be unloaded. Sunlight filters through the windows, creating upon the walls shadowy reminders of the Night Walker we faced last year. Last year; has it been only a year since I started going to school here? I remember it clearly, saying goodbye to my foster father, the nervous plane trip, meeting Yasui, and of course my roommate Osman with the funny eyes. At that time I thought I finally knew myself. After 13 years of feeling I had never fit in before, finally I had discovered my true nature. I was Dean Chesterfield, an Artificer from my mother’s side and a Decedent of Cain from my father’s. Now I feel I am right back where I started, and I can’t help wondering what happened.

The biggest source of my confusion is, of course, the return of my real parents. That they loved me wasn’t the issue. They loved me enough as a tiny baby to make a deal with a devil to save my life. Of course, they didn’t realize that devil was the cause of my condition, and thus became his servants for the last thirteen years unnecessarily. If they’d just killed him instead of making that deal my future would have been very different, but they couldn’t have known. I didn’t blame them for it, how could I? They did what they felt was the only thing they could do, after everything else they had tried, failed. After learning their story my friends and I rescued them in early March of this year, right before the end of school. It was a flurry of activity after that, as they were whisked off to a hospital before we hardly introduced ourselves. Tests were run, Seers looked them over, psychologists talked to them for hours; I could hardly see them, with doctors always hovering around and finals coming up I needed to study for.

My grades, incidentally, weren’t stellar, at least in the more

traditional courses like history and math. On the other hand, my teacher didn't have a high enough grade to give me in Ability Focused Studies when I showed him all the talismans I had made over the course of the year. My father, Edmond Chesterfield, chuckled and said I took after my mother, Barbara, who said the same thing when I showed her I could levitate objects, call out my *Spirit Projection*, create *Spirit Clones* and all the rest. I had rescued them and was proving to be excellent at using my powers, which is all the school really cared about. Oh, if I had flunked out of everything else there would have been trouble, make no mistake. Reality was, roughly zero percent of the population was born with powers every year. Two hundred out of 134 million, to be roughly exact. While the school gave lip service to wanting us to have a "rounded education," in reality our future as protectors of the world was assured. When you were facing down a couple of demons it didn't matter if you knew when World War Two started or why, it mattered if you could survive the encounter.

When they were finally released from the hospital they had reams of paper detailing what they should and should not eat, exercises to do to regain loss muscle mass, psychologists to call if they felt depressed. They then had a difficult choice to make, regarding our family. Donald, that's my step-father, had sold their house and most of their stuff years ago, and put the rest into storage. At this point they basically had the world to choose from as to where they should go to settle down. It was at this point the Foundation stepped up with a very generous offer- namely, go to work for them and live on Demongate Island for basically nothing. I guess they still needed a lot more members, as most people who worked there died a couple of years ago in the whole Charna mess, and they had yet to fill all available positions. Apparently they were having a hard time finding people who wanted to work there, even today, so they needed people desperately. My parents accepted, and they moved here to Porta, a couple of miles from the school on the north-west side of the inland. I was given the choice to move in with them or stay with Donald.

It was a very difficult choice in the end, with a lot of factors to think about, as you might imagine. I didn't know these people who were my parents, as Donald had raised me practically my whole life. I wanted to get to know my real parents, of course, but was me saying "Well, I rescued my folks, thanks for everything Donald, see you." really fair to him? He had watched me grow up, and in a very real sense I was his son, not Edmond's. Staying near the school meant I could take some summer

classes and continue pushing my skills, which I was very interested in doing. In the end it was Donald himself that made my decision easier. As he expected, the sale of the pocket watch he had taken from the dragon's hoard netted him several million dollars. So he decided to close his shop for a while and tour the world.

"I don't want you to feel guilty about 'leaving' me or anything like that," he had said to me. "I'm your past now, and you would be far better served learning the limits of your abilities at Demongate. That's your future. Remember what I said to you when you unboxed your egg? I'm even more convinced of it now; you're going to be one of the greatest people this world has ever known, and I'm proud to have been the one who raised you."

So I decided to live with them, and all my stuff was moved to my new home on the island. They bought all new stuff, and my parents and I started to get to know each other. I have to admit, it was a little funny how clueless they were. After all, they went from being parents to slaves, and now they were back to being parents again, but I was mostly grown up. They had long been away from the world, chained to a table and forced to make things for the devil that "owned" them. Now that they were free they were kind of at loose ends. I often found them just staring out at the ocean or crying out in their sleep. I knew they were trying to be strong for me, but they had a lot of issues to work out between themselves. Of course technology had left them behind a bit as well, they were amazed at what computers could do now! The Foundation set them up with a nice lab, where they got to work making things for operatives in the field. At least now it was for our side, and they were getting paid for it, rather than being beaten.

I too saw some psychologists, but mainly to help me understand what they were going through and to know what to expect from them. I was told it would be a long recovery for them, and helping them get into a routine and back to normal life would be key, which I did my best to help with. In one sense I felt it wasn't fair, as my parents they should be taking care of me, not the other way around. I did understand they had been through a lot so I needed to be patient with them. Our true coming together as a family would be gradual and a long time in coming, if it came at all. I was willing to try my best and my parents seemed to want to get to know the person I had become, so I was hopeful for the future.

It still left me puzzled though, I had never had a mother before, that I remembered. How was I supposed to act around her? The same

being true with my father; I was Donald's son, not Edmond's, and I had picked up Donald's habits growing up rather than my real father's, and that bothered me a little. Should I try to act more like them? Would they not love me as much if I didn't do things "their way?" I also wondered if I should stay with them instead of moving into the dorms, but I was told it was probably best to do both. I could visit them, stay some weekends, but live at the school the majority of the time. It was within walking distance, after all, so it made sense to give them some space now that they were a bit more settled. They had been filling orders for things and seemed a lot more focused these past few weeks, so I wasn't too worried about them. I looked at the clock- it was about time for the plane to be landing, and I couldn't wait to see my friends again. I jumped off the bed and started downstairs. I couldn't help but smile as I said my goodbyes and ran down to the airfield, eager to hear how my friend's summer had gone.

There were many other students and a couple of teachers crowded around the so called airport waiting for the plane to land when I arrived. I knew most of the kids, as they either lived on the island or were taking summer classes like I was, so I said hello and made small talk while we waited. Right on time, the plane appeared in the sky and got bigger and bigger, finally landing and taxiing down the runway. I watched as students poured out of the door and greet people they knew, and I didn't have to wait long to see my three friends leave the plane and waved them over to me.

Yasui ran over and hugged me, and Osman shook my hand, both were obviously glad to see me. Christina was nearby and said hello, but looked like she thought all of this was a waste of time. I'm sure I was grinning widely as I asked about their vacation, and they told me what they had been doing.

"You actually took more classes? You're allowed to have fun, you know, that's why they call it a 'summer vacation.'" Yasui teased.

"The classes I took were fun!" I protested. "I learned how to use Spirit Sense and improved my talisman making. I haven't made anything new, but of course I have lots of ideas for stuff."

They all rolled their eyes. "Still obsessed with talismans, then?" asked Osman.

"They're what I do best," I replied.

"I hope so," he continued, "I have something to ask you later, once

we get settled in.”

“Sure. And how’s Katrina, my favorite spirit girl, doing these days?” I asked, looking at Osman.

A tiny figure shimmered into existence beside him, complete with little wings and trailing sparkly dust, a fairy. “Oh, his belief in me has saved my life,” the fairy said, zooming around my head. “Thank you, kind boy!”

I laughed. “So you’re a fairy now, Kat?”

“Sure,” she answered, hovering in front of me and spinning slowly in place. “My *Illusions* can be anything, why not something fun?”

“Hey, I don’t mind.” I quickly said. “I think it’s a good look.”

She blushed, looking down and pointing one toe, drawing a line in the sand that appeared beneath her. “Thanks. Glad you had a good summer,” then she shimmered and was gone again.

“She was always talking about you and wondering what you were up to,” said Osman. “She’s been waiting to show you her fairy form for weeks now.”

“Nice to see her having some fun with her powers. Say, is your English better, Osman?”

“Kat’s been drilling me over the summer, and she’ll only talk to me in English now, so I’ve gotten better.”

“It sounds it. Let’s get you guys unpacked. I’ll be happy to help you all with your luggage if you want. Spirit Clone!” I shouted, not putting in any extra effort. I still got two, and they both went over to get luggage and help carry it to the bus that arrived to take us all to school. Not to be outdone, Yasui did the same and also got two, and between the eight of us we got everything carried onto the bus in one trip. We got some strange looks and double takes, as three of the same people twice walked onto the bus and sat down. This being Demongate High, no one really made a fuss. Those destined for the role of Prefect or Head of the dorms glared a little longer, the use of powers outside the classroom being technically forbidden. We weren’t showing off or endangering ourselves or others, and most everyone knew me because of my taking varied Ability Focused Studies classes, so they let it slide.

Like last year there were several days before classes start, giving students time to learn the school again and get used to being away from home. I planned to put some time in on some talisman projects I had in mind, just in case I needed them later. The next day, however, Osman came to me with a request that put those plans on hold.

## 2

### What We Do For Friends

*What have you done for me lately?*

After breakfast the next morning, Osman asked if I had time to discuss that thing he had mentioned earlier. I told him sure, so we went back to our dorm and sat down.

“I’m sorry to ask you this when we’ve just come back, but I don’t know how long it will take, you know? I want you to make me something.”

“Sure thing Osman, I’d be happy to! What sort of thing are we talking about here?”

Osman seemed hesitant. “I want you to make me,” he paused, wringing his hands. “Make me...”

“Yes?”

“An ultimate weapon.”

“Oh my!” I said, eyeing him. He was looking away. “But could I really live with myself if I made you *a very small bomb* that linked all suns through hyperspace? I mean, I live in this universe, you know; blowing it up would seriously inconvenience me.”

He looked at me like I had gone crazy. “What are you talking about?”

I sighed. “I keep forgetting you probably haven’t read the same books as I have. Just what exactly do you want me to make?”

He looked away again. “Remember last year, when we went to rescue your parents?”

“It does stick out in my mind, yes.”

“Then you remember how useless I was in that battle.”

“You passed out the wards, that was useful!”

“But the battle would have been won without them,” he countered. “If I had been able to actually fight at that time, it probably would have ended sooner. It was lucky that devil was as unprepared as he was, it could have gone much worse.”

“I agree, but we got through it. Honestly, how many times are you going to be fighting in the Demon World? I’d guess never again. Anywhere else you can just *Petition* an angel or angels to fight for you,

right?”

Osman looked even more crestfallen, if that was possible. “I-” he started. “I can’t.”

“Heaven took away your powers? Why?” I was aghast, this was serious!

He looked up sharply. “No, no it’s nothing like that.” He stared at the floor again. “I just-”

Katrina appeared in her new fairy form, sitting prettily on his shoulder. “He’s trying to figure out a way to not blame me,” she said, “but let’s both be honest here, Osman. It’s my fault, and hiding that won’t make anything better.”

“Your fault?” I asked, shocked. “But you’re just a spirit, how can anything be your fault?”

“It’s because I’m not an angel,” she said sadly.

“Okay, you both better start at the beginning.”

Katrina took a deep “breath” and looked over at me. “Fair enough. The truth is, Osman is terrified of using his power outside the classroom because, like you said, at any time Heaven could take that power away from him. Imagine if some stranger at the Foundation could monitor every little use of your power, and if they didn’t like what you were doing with it, zip, they took it away from you. Now normally a Petitioner has an angel to guide them and tell them when it’s appropriate to Petition someone and when it’s not. Osman, on the other hand, only has me. While I have the knowledge of the angel so I know how to speak English and what different types of demons there are and things, I don’t know Heaven’s will. What if I give him wrong advice, and it’s my fault he loses his powers? That would be terrible!”

I thought for a moment. “I agree, but surely some allowance would be made for the fact you aren’t an angel?”

“Is it worth taking that risk?”

“I... I take it you haven’t spoken to any teachers, or your parents, about this concern?”

“It’s kind of embarrassing,” mumbled Osman.

“Plus, there’s never been a Petitioner without an angel before now, that we know of. So how could a teacher give advice about our situation?”

“I guess that’s between you two, but now is the time to work this sort of thing out, you know, before you graduate and have to make bigger decisions. Wow. I did wonder why I never saw you Petition something, I

guess now I know. I'm sorry you had to carry this kind of burden on your own."

"Oh, there are other reasons," said Katrina, looking over at Osman. "We may as well tell him."

Osman nodded, sadly.

"Two other reasons, to be exact," she went on. "The first has to do with how hard angels are to actually call down. Take calling upon Haniel for example: using no extra energy and not lengthening the ten minute ritual, Osman has a one in three chance of actually succeeding. That means for every half hour of Petitioning he might get lucky one time. So he either has to spend an hour and a little extra energy, or take the normal time and spend about a third of his total energy. We figured it out because in class one day we Petitioned Haniel three times before Osman was exhausted and couldn't do it anymore."

"But you'll get better at it, right?"

Osman shook his head. "My teacher says I'm almost as good as he is at Petitioning."

"Oh. Is Haniel particularly hard to call?"

"Actually he's slightly harder because we know him personally. Getting a random angel seems to be easier than asking for a specific one, for some reason. You would almost think it was the other way around."

"Oh, again."

"So that's the first problem- length. If we got into a fight, forget Petitioning anything. By the time we finished, the fight would be long over. The second problem goes along with the first. Instead of an angel protecting Osman, I am, and ESPer abilities take a huge amount of energy. Remember how tired Osman was after that fight to free your parents?"

I nodded.

"While you and Christina and Albert and everyone were hardly winded. That hermit demon we met said the same thing, Osman just has no energy compared to everyone else. If he Petitions something in battle it'll wipe him out, and that leaves me no energy to defend him with!"

"Your powers did come in handy, I remember watching those devils get tossed around, they were so surprised!"

Osman chuckled. "Yeah, she did more than I did in that fight."

I got up and paced back and forth a little, thinking. "So you're worried you'll be in a similar situation, or get caught on your own somewhere, and run out of energy and be helpless?"

"That's right."

“You must have other abilities though.”

“The only ability I have not directly related to *Petitioning* is *Prayer*, but my teacher says I need to basically master *Petitioning* and *Transcending* in order to learn it. So basically, no.”

“Well that’s a problem,” I said, spinning to face them. “Lucky for you guys, you came to the right person. So what’ll it be? A sword made of fire, called out from a ring on your finger? A whip made of electricity? A spear that can talk to you and fight for you and warn you of danger? Whatever you want, if I can make it for you, I will make it for you, no problem.”

Osman smiled at me. “Thanks Dean.”

“You’re the best,” echoed Katrina.

“No close weapons though. Remember what Christina said last year? Why be right next to the thing trying to kill you, if you can help it?” said Osman.

I got out a sheet of paper and wrote “Osman’s Weapon” at the top. Then a few lines down I wrote “used from range.”

“Also,” he said, “I’d love it if it somehow took advantage of my eyes. I can see great distances, after all.”

I nodded and noted down “Accurate at long distances.”

“Your energy is low, so it has to be super efficient or have some way of recharging itself, or use some kind of ammo.”

They both nodded. I added “rechargeable/ammo?” to the list.

“I want to carry it everywhere,” said Osman, “So I’d like it to be small if possible.”

I added “Travel Size,” then crossed it out and wrote “Fun Sized” instead. They both laughed.

I looked at the list. “The trouble is, I could easily make you a glove or something that gives you the ability to use *Elemental Attack*, the principal himself has one, I think. That would drain a little energy each time you activated it though.”

“I’ve seen *Elemental Attack* before, isn’t it kind of slow?”

“Yeah, it only goes as fast as the person generating it can throw, so unless you’re right on top of the thing you’re blasting...” I noted down “can’t dodge” on the list.

We all studied the list a moment. “This really will be an ultimate weapon,” I said at last. “You’re talking about a blaster out of *Star Wars* here, you know that right?”

“Can it be done?”

“I shall make it, or die, my master.”

We both laughed a little, then sobered. “Seriously, can you do it?”

I took a deep breath. “No. Sorry.”

“What?”

“Look, I want to, and I’m pretty sure everything on this list is achievable, but only as individual items. Let me explain.” I took out my ghost shaped talisman and the tiny sword talisman and set them on the desk by the bed. “Take this one first,” I said, pointing to the ghost one. “Took me practically no time at all, and why? Okay, I cheated, technically, but let’s not dwell on that. The main reason this kind of talisman is easier to make is because it uses my natural energy to activate. Of course I’m a fantastic talisman maker, not to brag, which helped. Now take the other one.” I held up the sword. “Not accounting for the time it took me to work out the formula for actually making it, it still took me a month of solid work to construct, you saw how many hours I poured into it, right? It’s the very same reason; this item doesn’t take energy to activate, it’s always activated. That means when making it, I had to bind a bunch of energy into it, apart from what it “stole” to create the effect of four *ley lines*, and even I can’t get something for nothing. It comes down to this- making energy based items is half as difficult as making permanent items. Now you want me to make you a ray gun of some kind, and as this whole thing is being talked about because you have low energy, Osman, it will all have to be made permanent. But there’s another snag you don’t know about.”

“It figures.”

“I know. Basically, the more power I force into an object, the longer and harder I have to work to force other powers in too.” I grabbed a sheet of paper and started scribbling. “Just as a rough estimate, working eight hours a day on this, no time off...” I calculated some stuff. “Figure three months at best. Working only two hours, about the amount of free time I have, it would take me an entire year!”

“So that’s out then,” he said sadly.

I nodded. “Don’t get me wrong, this is a fantastic idea, and I want to make part of it for myself, honestly, but putting all these powers into one object just isn’t practical. That’s why Inheritor items are so rare, and can only do a handful of things. Take Yasui’s boots, out of the hundreds of kids here, she’s the only one with a pair of boots that can let her jump really high and improve her speed. Swords can harm invulnerable things and are maybe a little sharper than normal, and if you’re lucky

they'll catch something on fire or have some other effect, but that's it. I'm still happy to make you something. We're going to have to find you a talisman I can make that will let you fight if you need to, but only has one or two things it can do. I have something in mind, but I'm going to have to get a book from the library to see if it's practical."

"Well, it's just an idea, you don't have to do it now."

"Of course I do!" I countered. "Spirit Clone!" I shouted.

Two of me appeared in the room with Osman, and I pointed to one and said "You. Albert." He nodded, and both of them took off.

"What was that all about?" asked Katrina.

"I sent one of myself to get Albert, this idea that's struck me is now burning my mind alive and I must know if it can be done. The other me is heading to the library. I tell you, doing chores at home with Spirit Clones is the only way to go."

They both looked at me darkly.

"What? I have powers and by goodness I'm going to use them. I'm sorry you're afraid of yours, and you have every reason to be, but don't expect me to not exploit every advantage I've been given."

Osman sighed. "I know, I should not be jealous. The power I have been given is an important one, and once out of school I can work at a place with other Petitioners who can guide me in proper application of it."

"I really think you should be talking to a councilor or teacher or someone other than me about this," I said. "If they don't know something is wrong, they can't help you fix it."

"I will," he resolved. "But no matter what, that won't solve the problem of my energy being so low, or needing Kat to protect me."

"True, but maybe I could make you a talisman like my shirt, that acted as armor. Then you wouldn't need so much protecting."

He nodded. "Yes, that's a good idea too, I'll keep it in mind."

"Good. Let's wait for me to get back and we'll see if what I have in mind will work."

Albert arrived a moment later with a quizzical look on his face. "This is all very weird," he said, looking at the two Deans in the room.

"Didn't I tell you I was twins?" I joked.

"I'm the better looking one," said my clone.

"It's just something he can do," said Osman. "Nice to see you again, Albert. How was your summer?"

“It was very nice, for a change. The world didn’t end nor was there the threat of the world ending, so it actually was quite peaceful. I even saw my brother, and he didn’t overtly try to kill me, which was a nice change.”

“This all happens to you often?”

“More than I would like to admit. So, what can I do for... both of you?”

“Just had a quick Alchemy question for you, sparked by my discussion here with Osman about a possible weapon for him.”

“Shoot.”

“Can you make me something, like a crystal, that can hold energy? I’m talking about a lot of it. Possibly even a bizarrely huge amount.”

He considered a moment. “It’s not something I would usually make, so I can’t say I know off the top of my head.”

“Is there a book you could look in?”

He nodded, and told me a title.

I gestured to my *Spirit Clone*, who nodded to me and disappeared. Albert jumped.

“Did you learn *Teleportation*?”

“What? Oh, no, I just released the technique that created him. As all the knowledge he accumulated went into me, and I have another clone at the library, that clone now knows to get that book you asked for as well as the one I wanted.”

Albert looked at Osman with a sort of “is this guy for real” look.

“It’s okay, he learned the technique from Yasui, it’s some kind of True Martial Artist thing.”

“How is Yasui anyway?”

“Doing well, I’m sure she’ll be around soon, you two can catch up.”

“Good, good. Incidentally, can you learn to *Teleport*?” asked Albert, a dangerous gleam in his eye.

I frowned, then walked over to my pouch and took out a binder. “Let’s see here...” I said, paging through it. “Teleportation is actually very hard, not even all ESPer teachers here can do it. I think I remember seeing- Ah, here we are, yes, I could learn to call the spirit of the hummingbird, which would allow anyone I asked it to assist to Teleport. Did you have a destination in mind?”

“Yes. I’m running low on *Bloodiron* but I know where there’s tons of it, if I could just get back there. I was thinking, in exchange for making

you this crystal or whatever, could you help me get more and bring it back here?"

"Absolutely!" I said. "I'll have to ask it to give you the skill, as you've been there and I haven't. I'll need a few days to master the ritual, but I do have to warn you, you won't be great at it. Now I can give some people the spirit of the ant like I did when we first Petitioned Haniel, so they could help you out, but don't blame me if we only make it half way there."

"I'm sure it won't be an issue. I'm certain I can make up some *Ameliorating Medicament* to help me out."

"It's settled then! Given you can actually help me out- heck, even if you can't I don't mind helping out a friend."

"Thanks."

A few minutes later my other clone was back from the library and Albert took his book and I took mine. We both flipped through in silence for a while and Albert suddenly grinned.

"Yes," he said, "There is a crystal I can cook up that can absorb energy."

"Great! What's the catch? I know there's a catch."

"You want it to absorb a ridiculous amount of energy, that's the catch. The amount of energy it can hold depends on the size of the crystal that's made, so your normal tiny charms aren't going to cut it for this one."

"I see. So it would be more like an amulet than a charm, is what you're telling me?"

"The crystal itself would have to be at least as big as a baseball to do what you want."

"Could it be reshaped?"

He shrugged. "I don't see why I couldn't use *Transmogrification* to reshape it."

"Okay, so it could technically be made in the shape of something, then just covered with Bloodiron to keep it from being cracked. After all, if we're going after Bloodiron anyway... I could make the crystal into a talisman that drains a tiny bit of energy every hour, not enough to even notice. Then I make a lump of Bloodiron into a talisman that lets me use energy like a Spirit Energist to pull it out. You put them together into a fancy shape and it's done!"

"I think that could work just fine."

“But how does any of this help me?” protested Osman.

“Oh, I’m still looking into stuff for you,” I answered. “This crystal and your idea have broadened your options though.”

“How so?”

“Well first, don’t forget I can make talismans that help us use our powers better, or maybe I never talked to you about that? Maybe it was Albert?” I looked over at him, and he shrugged. It was a while ago. “Anyway, I could make you a talisman that helped you Petition so you wouldn’t have to use that extra energy.”

“Which brings us back to the problem of not knowing Heaven’s will.”

“Right, but there is a second option; If I get this energy crystal system working, you can have my Tyrfing talisman.”

“You mean it? You were just saying how long it took you to make!”

“I know, but it looks like you need it more than I do. Also I have a lot more energy than you do, so in theory I would build it up in this crystal faster than you, too. It seems to me this will actually work out better for me, using that talisman means I have to spend as much energy of my own as I get from the fake ley lines it provides. Using this new one I’m considering is better, because I’m just storing my own energy and then getting it back- thus I can use as much or as little as I wanted to at any one time. See how that works?”

“That would be a bad fit for me because of how slowly my energy comes back after I use it?”

“Exactly. I don’t get tired very fast, but you getting drained of energy would make you tired all the time, or be too slow to be useful. Remember last year in health class when we talked about this? It’s been determined you get back about 5% of your energy per hour, so making this talisman drain half that much out of someone would hardly be noticed, as it would even out in the end. But 5% of my energy is a lot more than 5% of yours.”

“So using your talisman helps a little, but I still have low energy. If I have to use the same amount I get from the talisman, that means I would hardly double my energy!”

“I know, it’s sort of an odd situation, but it’s all I can offer you. People with a lot of energy, like me, gain only a little benefit when using ley lines, because they’re going to spend more of their own energy and only a little ley line energy. People like you with low energy, who need it

most, don't get the benefit because they just don't have it to spend in the first place. Does that make sense? Whoever set the whole thing up had a weird sense of humor, I think."

"I think that would be The All-Father," said Osman.

"I rest my case."

He glared at me.

"It's like only going to the bank when you need money. If you have money, and don't need it, banks will fall all over themselves to lend you more. But if you actually need it, they don't even want to talk to you."

"You're right. What makes one person have more energy anyway?"

"What makes one girl more beautiful than another?"

"Ah, I see your point. Anyway, Osman, you can start learning Spirit Sense this year, and find real ley lines to use too, further stretching your energy. If you were just hiding somewhere, Petitioning, it would be okay. Most people can't use them in battle because they have to move around, losing them. You don't have that problem."

He looked thoughtful. "I still would like a weapon of some kind."

"Yeah, I'm not sure about what I was thinking of before. Oh, I found it alright, I just don't know how practical it would be." Osman stared at me quizzically. "There's a talisman I can make that just releases a devastating burst of power, enough to take out, well, let's leave it at a house. My thought was, ask a Holy Chosen to help me and it'll release holy power. That way it would only harm demons and the like, rather than property. However it would either be always active or you would have to activate it with energy, and it would take a lot of energy to activate. Not so bad if you hooked into the other talisman beforehand, but still, we're right back where we started."

"Some sort of close combat weapon."

"Maybe. I think I could scale it down a little, you don't need to be destroying any houses in the future I hope. So what about being able to snap your fingers, spend a little energy, and engulf someone in fire? That could be useful, and hard to dodge because they wouldn't see it coming."

"Yeah, I like that!"

"Now back to the weapon idea, I've not had a chance to do this yet, but it's a really great use of something I can do- I could make whatever you decide on into a tattoo. Put it on your hand and you could conjure a weapon or a burst of an element. In this case I don't recommend holy

power, just in case you were fighting something other than a demon, though it would be more effective against demons. Sort of like using a weapon blessed by a Holy Chosen, it would be totally useless against regular people.”

“At the very least it couldn’t be taken away from me.”

“If someone cut your hand where the tattoo was, the power would be gone, so even that’s not exactly true.”

“Well, let me think about it, if you come across anything else let me know. Once you come back from getting the blood metal and have your new toy made I’ll decide.”

“Whatever you want, Osman. Why don’t I get started making the diagrams for the energy talisman,” I nodded to my Spirit Clone who was still hanging around, “while I go find someone that can teach me the hummingbird spirit?”

Osman and Albert both just shook their heads and sighed.

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