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**Chronicles**

**#1: The Mage**

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**The Mage**

Forgotten Age Year 604

**Chapter One**

 “There are moments in everyman’s life that define who they are and what they are to become. Those moments aren’t always easy to see coming. Often times they take us by surprise. How else to measure the real worth of a person’s being?” Grand Master Ka’Lar said, standing at the alter in the front of the class. He was an aging man with a sense of power radiating around him. He had a full set of hair, long since gray, with eyes that seemed to look into the souls of each and every student.

 The class before him was full of promise. Young men from all over the kingdom of Pharmakeia had gathered at the Institute to study under Ka’Lar and the other masters. The stories that surrounded Ka’Lar’s youth are the stuff of legends, it was part of what made the institute such a draw for so many people. Legends have it that he was one of the first humans who managed to harness magic for his own use, some 150 years ago.

 There was not another school for sorcerers with such high regard in all the realms of man. In fact, Pharmakeia was said to be one of the few kingdoms that actively encouraged sorcery. Most of mankind feared what they saw as the dark arts. The age of Lucifer and his hoard of demons was not so far removed as to be cast from the thoughts of man. Nor was the fall of the Dreamer and the rise of the half-breeds. Most people believed that dealing with anything “unhuman” was to be blamed for his fall and would do the same to all others who dealt in such things. In fact, in recent years other kingdoms have cut off trade with Pharmakeia due to a misguided belief that Ka’Lar had fallen in much the same way. They point to his extended life as proof, not daring to believe that simply channeling the magics that come from the Earth itself could lead to such wonders.

 Anyone who knew Ka’Lar knew the rumors to be nothing more than that. He was a wise man, who cared deeply for not only his students but the world at large. He was seen by all in the know as a shinning example of what was possible with hard work and determination. As such, only the best of the best were admitted into his school. It was an honor that most would kill for, but not Finn. He was a natural. His father, Kal, was a subpar student who failed out of the school. He pushed his son hard, hoping that he could be redeemed by his son’s success. Finn picked up on his father’s teaching like most kids pick up on walking.

 It wasn’t long before Finn had surpassed his father and was teaching himself new tricks and spells. He was one of the few students who didn’t have to apply to school. They sought him out and gave him a full ride. He was one of only a handful of students who got to train under Ka’Lar himself. It was said to be the highest honor that a student could receive. It was an honor that Finn could care less about.

 He had a sense of entitlement that only being naturally great at something could give you. He never had to work at anything and it had made him cocky. Even in his dealings with Ka’Lar. He had yet to face any task that he couldn’t overcome in mere moments. Ka’Lar was at wits end with the boy but was determined to help him, after all, that kind of power could not be allowed to exist in the world unchecked.

 “Feel like he’s talking to you?” Kat asked, as the crowd broke up and she left the assembly with Finn. He gave her a slight smirk, attempting to show off his legendary ego.

 “Who else?” Finn said with a laugh. She was a short athletic girl with her own claim to fame. She wasn’t as natural at sorcery as Finn, but she was a quick study and worked harder than anyone else at the school. Not that anyone else would notice. She was the first woman admitted into the school, Ka’Lar took a liking to her spunk and allowed her in. Not that anyone else cared. The Institute was a boy’s club, and no one there was about to let her forget it. Except for Finn. Their first meeting was in one of Ka’Lar’s private classes and Finn took an instant liking to her form. He had never seen a woman as beautiful as her before, his father had never let him talk to girls. Better for him to focus on his powers and worry about women when he was established as a mystic knight of Pharmakeia. Not a dream of Finn’s, but it was important to his father.

 At first Finn wasn’t sure how to act around her and tried to show off but Kat would have none of it, she put him in his place fairly quickly. To date she was the only student or teacher to embarrass him. She was the only one he saw at school as an equal with the exception of Ka’Lar, but unlike Ka’Lar, he respected Kat. She studied every night till the early morning and then excelled at every class and never complained, never said a word. In fact, she acted like it came easy to her. She took a leaf out of Finn’s book and took to mocking the lesser students. Cementing her friendship with Finn.

 “So what moments are going to define you?” Kat asked, her tone mocking him. He laughed and waved his hand in front of a nearby wall. The wall morphed into a hallway. Nearby students turned to look as Finn and Kat walked through the passageway.

 “I’m not yet sure. These moments are hard to see coming.” Finn said, a grin etched on his face.

 “If only we could figure out how to measure your worth.” Kat said, her tone more mocking than before. The two friends have a laugh as a new student tried to enter the hallway and ran into the wall that was once there. The friends laugh louder.

 “I never get over how amazing your custom spells are. A hallway just for us.” Kat said impressed.

 “What, your books never taught you anything like this?” Finn asked, knowing the answer.

 “Not even close. I wish I could create my own magic.” Kat said, wistfully.

 “It’s not hard.” Finn said. He snapped his fingers and music started playing throughout the hallway. “Just think about what you want and it’s yours.”

 “If only it was that easy. You’re the only person I’ve ever met who can do that.” Kat said.

 “What about the great Ka’Lar? If you believe the hype he came up with half the spells in those books you love so much.” Finn said. His tone saying he didn’t believe a word of it.

 “Mr. Finn!” a blooming voice filled the hallway. Finn and Kat stopped laughing as they turned to look at each other. The humor gone from their faces. In front of them Grand Master Ka’Lar appeared. He did not look happy.

 “Grand Master.” Finn said, bowing as he spoke. Kat bowed next to him. Ka’Lar did not look amused. “How great to see you.”

 “Funny, I was unaware that there was a hallway leading from the auditorium to your room. How could I have missed that?” His tone was firm, he meant business. Kat looked terrified. Finn smiled.

 “It’s ok Grand Master. Old age has a way of doing that to you. It’s not your fault.” Finn said. The height of arrogance. Ka’Lar wasn’t used to people talking back to him. His eyes lit up, glowing a bright shade of red and the air expelled out of Finn’s lungs. He fell to the ground, gasping for breath but unable to breath.

 “Finn!” Kat yelled, kneeling at Finn’s side. She looked up at Ka’Lar. “Grand Master, please!” She begged. He turned to look at her, his eyes returning to normal. At last Finn managed to take in some air. His breathing rough.

 “Take him back to his room.” Ka’Lar said to Kat. He looked down at Finn who struggled to sit up. “You may be powerful, but you are not my equal. I still have much to teach you. Don’t believe your own *hype* Finn. It does you a disservice.” With that Ka’Lar vanished. Leaving Finn alone in the arms of Kat.

 “Are you ok?” She asked Finn, worry in her voice. He nodded as she helped him to his feet. “He shouldn’t have treated you like that.” Finn pushed her off of him.

 “Leave me be.” He snapped at her. Storming away from her. She tried to follow him but found herself in the middle of students in the cafeteria.

 “Finn.” She said to herself. The other students turned to look at her. A few even smirking. It was rare for them to see her humiliated.

-WZ-

 Finn blasted open his quarters door. He was fuming at the mouth. Master Ka’Lar made him look a fool, a feat not many would attempt. The fact that he did it in front of Kat made it all the worst. She was the only one he saw as an equal. He couldn’t bear the thought of her looking at him as a joke, like people had looked at his father.

 He waved his hand around the room and his belongings started to pack themselves. He had had enough of this school. The instructors were far inferior to him, hiding behind their age, as if age was all it took to gain wisdom. He was far superior to everyone else here. They all knew it. How could they not? Master Ka’Lar feared the day when Finn took over the title of greatest sorcerer alive. That was the only reason he attacked him so unfairly. Well if that was the case, so be it. Finn would strike out on his own, make his own mark on this world and surpass anything that *Master* Ka’Lar had ever done.

**Chapter 2**

 Getting out of the Institute was child’s play for one of Finn’s skill level. The Masters put up obstacles to prevent students from escaping the campus, but Finn had figured out ways around them in his first year. He went out to the nearby villages time and again to have some fun. Toying with the norms that lived under the protection of the Masters. He never went too far, not willing to risk the wrath of Ka’Lar and the other Masters.

 Those worries were gone from him now. He had nothing left to learn from them, if he was honest with himself he hadn’t been gaining anything from his classes for some time. All he had learned since coming to the Institute, he had learned from the forbidden books in the library. It was far to simple to get past the protective spells around the books. They had all kinds of knowledge in them. Spells that could change the fabric of the universe itself. Finn found a safe space under the school to practice such spells. It was slow going but he was starting to make some headway. He managed to sneak a few of the books out with him.

 Now that he was free from this prison, for a lack of a better word, he planned on sitting up his own “Institute” in a smaller town. Make himself a king and train followers. He had great power and he deserved to be shown the respect that could only come from great power.

 Once outside of the borders of Pharmakeia Finn was discouraged to see a small sample of how others lived. He grew up just inside the great wall, and while it was by no means a glamorous life, they had everything they needed provided for them. It was an easy life when compared to those even just outside the gates.

 It made him sick. Pharmakeia had more than enough wealth, enough food to take care of all these people, yet they did nothing. They hoarded their wealth to build themselves up, to make themselves more powerful and turned a blind eye to those in need. Just another reason for Finn to turn against the Masters.

 When he builds his kingdom, he would do better. The people lined up around his land would be provided for just as the people inside. He would show the world that not only was he more powerful than *“the great”* Ka’Lar could ever hope to be, but that he was also a far greater man.

 But he could not do it here, so near to Pharmakeia. Under the vengeful eyes the Masters. They would never allow a *drop-out* to show them up. He had to travel outside their range of influence.

 So, travel he did. Days turned into weeks, turned into months. Till Finn lost all track of time. He had no idea where he was, where he was headed or how much time had passed. When he first set out on his journey he planned on just conquering a kingdom. It would have been no challenge for him. All he had to do was pick a kingdom at war with Pharmakeia and overpower them, but somehow, he found himself in the middle of nowhere. None of his maps seemed to chart this land. He was, for all intents and purposes, lost.

 The moon had over taken the sky as Finn settled down for the night. A quick wave of his hands set up his camp. The bushes near him started rumbling. A fawn few out of the bushes, just as rocks moved into a circle formation at Finn’s feet. Sticks flew in from all directions, landing in the center of the circle and catching fire. Sturdy logs formed a spit that impaled the fawn and started roasting it for Finn. Another log found itself under Finn as he took a seat to keep warm near the fire.

 The fawn found itself skinned as it continued to cook, it’s skin draped itself around Finn. He sat there and watched the fawn cook, his mind racing a thousand miles an hour. He hated to admit it, but part of him was scared. He had never had to struggle in his life for anything, this was a first for him and he only seemed to be going deeper and deeper into the woods. Finding himself more and more lost. Part of him wanted to turn around and head back towards civilization. Return to his original plan, but another part of him, a stronger part of him urged him forward. It almost felt like an outside source forcing him forward, forcing him down this path.

 Finn shook his head, trying to force the idea from his head. “Impossible.” He said to himself. He was far too powerful for that. No one could manipulate him.

-WZ-

 His sleep was a restless one. He kept waking up with the urge to move on, to find his new place in the world. He knew it was just up ahead. Just out of sight, if only he could find it. He sat up warily and looked around. The moon was over head, looking down on him in it’s full glory, almost as if it was lighting his way towards his destiny.

 “Very well.” He said to himself, an attempt to quiet the voices in his head. He rose to his feet and snapped his fingers. His camp site dismantling itself much as it put itself together.

 With a calming breath, Finn took a step forward, and another and another. Following the light that no longer seemed to be coming from the moon but beckoned him forward regardless. A tiny voice in his mind screamed at him to turn around but Finn shook it off. He was not one for self-doubt. He was the most powerful man alive, far surpassing even the power of the overrated Ka’Lar.

 The morning sun peeked over the mountains tops. Finn wasn’t sure how long he was walking, only that it was a long time and his legs felt as if they were about to give up on him. But he forced himself forward, ignoring his pain. Any discomfort he felt now would be made worth it when he had a kingdom of his own to rule. When people spoke his name with reverence.

 The woods started to thin out. As the trees grew sparser so did his anxiety. It was almost as if he could feel his destiny closing in on him. A sense of purpose was starting to overwhelm him, but it was a pleasant feeling. For the first time he was starting to feel like his own man. Not just some kid following the orders of those older than himself. In the distance he saw the outline of a small town. Not on par with his homeland but still something to behold. It held promise. He had a newfound bounce to his step.

 It was a nice small town, each home seemed to be built with a sense of love and pride. Each one standing unique, a reflection of the owner. The villagers spared Finn glances as he walked through the town. It was an oddity, the men here seemed meek while the women seemed strong and empowered. It was a nice change from back home, where women were second class citizens to the men. He watched every day as Kat struggled to fit in in a world that didn’t want her. She had to prove herself twice as much as everyone else and yet it still never mattered. Finn hated seeing that, he saw her as his only true equal.

 The farther he walked through the town the more he saw that women here weren’t the equal of men, they ruled this town. The men seemed weak, almost subservient. It all made Finn a bit uneasy, but something drove him to keep moving forward. He belonged here, that much he knew.

 In front of him a large building with an oval top and what looked to be stone gargoyles standing guard in front. The most beautiful woman Finn had ever seen walked out, two men crawled out of the building at her heels. They had chains around their necks that connected to the woman’s belt. Two women with more muscles than Finn had ever seen flanked her.

 Finn was greatly disturbed by what he saw, the men seemed to grow weaker and weaker by the moment as they crawled after the women. Finn took a step back, the thrall that lured him here seeming to have vanished.

 “Hello, we’ve been waiting for you.” The beautiful woman said. Finn felt his heart melt. She was everything that Finn had been looking for his whole life. He had to have her as his queen. It was only fitting.

 “Have you now?” Finn said, trying to sound every bit as commanding and powerful as he felt. “My name is Finn, and I am the greatest sorcerer in the land. I came to see if I can be of service.” She smiled at him.

 “Greatest sorcerer in the land?” One of the guards asked, her tone mocking. Finn smirked at her. In an instant one of the gargoyles sprang to life and jumped on top of her. Pinning her to the ground. “What the hell? Get this off me!”

 “So, you are magical.” the beautiful woman asked. She held out her hand. “I’m Sin’Ta, ruler of this village.” Finn took the offered hand and kissed it. A momentary wariness took over him as his body seemed to shudder.

 “It’s an honor.” He said, looking into her eyes. His whole body aching. All the energy gone from his body. It seemed the lack of sleep was finally getting to him. “Do you have somewhere I can rest?”

 Sin’Ta smiled at him. “For a great hero like you, of course!”

**Chapter 3**

 The village was full of excitement at Finn’s arrival. Only fitting for a man with his power, his worth. Everyone there treated him as a king. He was given the grand tour, it wasn’t much but it was a start. This town was to be the center of his empire. From here he would strike out against Ka’Lar and all of Pharmakeia. He would wipe them from the history books, as if they never existed.

 Sin’Ta was his own personal guide. She showed him everything, introduced him to the important shop owners. He met the leaders of the warrior class as well as the educators of the village. The more Finn saw the more it started to dawn on him that this place was as different from Pharmakeia as Finn was from Ka’Lar. The women here ruled everything, while the men seemed almost like cattle. Thoughtlessly following the women around, almost as if they had no will of their own. It was the damnedest thing he had ever seen. Back in Pharmakeia, men ruled everything. Women were little more than second class citizens, but here, it wasn’t just the reversed, it was as if men were simply pets of the women. Carted around as little more than props to show off who was on top. It would not be allowed to stand once Finn was ruler of the place.

 He had hoped to start his take over quickly. He figured he would allow Sin’Ta to show him around, so that he could get a feel for his kingdom and then he would take it by force, but by time his tour was complete all he wanted to do was crawl into bed. He had never actually been sick before, he could only imagine this was what it felt like. It was getting harder and harder for him to concentrate. He just felt drained.

 “You feeling okay?” Sin’Ta asked Finn as she sat him down in her throne. It was a nice large chair, made of ivory. Finn had never seen anything as beautiful in his life. It was a throne fit for a king and Sin’Ta had sat Finn in it. She knew he was fit to rule. It brought a smile to his face.

 “I’m fine.” He said. The words caught in his throat, taking far more effort to get out than he would have thought possible.

 Sin’Ta stood in front of him, looking every bit a goddess. Her skin was silky smooth, her hair the most beautiful shade of black Finn had ever seen. Her dress matched it perfectly, what little of it she wore. She took a seat on his lap, running her hand across his chest.

 “I’m glad to hear it.” She said, her every word feeling him with pure bliss. “It’s not every day a treat like you walks into my life.” She ran her hand through his hair. He had never been more excited, more attracted to anyone in his life. Nor had he ever felt weaker.

 “I love you.” Finn said. He wasn’t sure what made him say it, the words almost spoke themselves. Only they were true, Finn loved Sin’Ta. More than he had ever loved anyone or anything in his life. He would gladly spend the rest of his life loving her, serving her. “Wait.” He said, that wasn’t right. He came here to rule, not serve. He came to build an empire to defeat. . . anyone who opposed Sin’Ta. She was everything.

 A devious grin spread across her face. She ran her hand down the side of his face as she leaned in. Her lips so close to his, so inviting. “What’s wrong?” She asked, her voice so soothing, so mocking. Something was wrong, Finn just couldn’t put together what it was. He tried to speak but he couldn’t, all he could do was stare at her lips. He longed to kiss her, feel the taste of her lips on his. He would give up everything for the chance to kiss her.

 “Cat caught your tongue?” Sin’Ta asked, running her finger down his lips. “I bet you must be so confused, wondering what is happening to you.” Finn tried to talk but the words wouldn’t come. “What do you want to do?” She asked him.

 He wanted to prove himself to his father, to his master, to the rest of the world. He wanted to rule. He wanted to be the most powerful sorcerer that ever lived. “I want to serve you.” The words came out of his mouth in place of any of the things he wanted to say. The second he spoke them he knew them to be true. All he wanted to do was serve her, worship her.

 “I know.” She told him. “But don’t blame yourself handsome, a being with your power, didn’t stand a chance.” She said, it was getting harder and harder for Finn to think. He couldn’t figure out what was going on.

 “Wh. . .what?” He forced himself to say. It took everything he had.

 “Aw, you do have power my pet. Most people in your position would be well past the point of forming words. But you, you are special. I can feed off of you for life times.” She said, pure joy in her voice.

 “Fee. . . ” He couldn’t finish the word. His mind was empting of thoughts.

 “Don’t try to fight it, you won’t win.” She said. “After all, a being with your raw power, coming so close to a village of Maccubus. You couldn’t help but be drawn to us. Our kind feeds on power, just as your kind is uncontrollably drawn to us.”

 As much as he tried to fight it, he knew her words rang true. And that terrified him.

**EPILOGUE**

 The whole village came out to see what Sin’Ta had to say. She was after all the first. The queen. She steps out in front of her home, her guards on either side of her. Attached on chains behind her, her two usual slaves, but attached on a much shorter chain, a defeated looking Finn. All life missing from him.

 “I have learned of a kingdom not far from here, where every citizen, even the weakest among them, have power. It is ruled by Masters of the craft, unlike this world has ever seen. We must gather our strength and conquer this land, known as Pharmakeia!”