

Chapter 5: Lyndonia. Miona

Lyndonia

On the fifth day after Astrello's arrival at Georgeburg Castle, the Bhogi had summoned Hollydeva early in the morning so that she could not visit Astrello.

»I have a journey to make, and I want you to accompany me!«

»Where are we going?«

»We have to go to Tangent Alley!«

»Where is this alley? I've never heard of it!«

»It's a little alley in the big city of Lyndonia!«

»How do we get there?«

»We are driven to the coast, board a ferry, get to a big island, take a train and get to Lyndonia, the capital of this island, where we are sometimes driven by carriages. But in the end, you have to push me so that we can get into that alley and prevent an occurrence.«

»What do we prevent? Who wants to prevent us from preventing it?«

»Yes, these are excellent questions, and I can only answer them there when I see how people react to our presence. Our adversaries are the wizards, people who wave magic wands and upset the balance of the world to gain an advantage. But, as you can imagine, an upset balance is no good!«

»When do we leave?«

»Let's leave right away now!«

Then the old nacharya added, »And, please, you call me Bhogi, without sir, master, lord or any such polite form of address. If you respect me, we will not get far!«

Then he suddenly looked at her firmly, »But if you don't respect me, we neither will!«

Hollydeva thought about this contradiction further during the drive and concluded that he probably meant two different kinds of respect. The general respect of the person was good and necessary. Respectful politeness in a critical situation, in a battle, would be obstructive, unnecessarily time-consuming.

So she pushed the Bhogi, who sat comfortably in his wheelchair, from Saint Pancras train station through the streets of Lyndonia, which seemed to be a really big city. She could not judge this, however, since she had never been in a city before. Everywhere there were houses, streets, and a swarm of people, with carriages that drove by themselves.

»The station is called Pancreas, that is a digestive gland!« Hollydeva amused herself. They had just been studying human anatomy in Father Septimus' class. She found the internal organs fascinating, especially since Father Septimus believed that every organ had a physiological and an energetic function.

The Bhogi looked over his shoulder at her, »The station is not called the pancreas station! It is named after Saint Pancras, one of the Ice Saints! Saint Pancras Station is the antipole to Valhalla, where the Nordic gods dwell!«

»Ice Saint? Nordic gods? Are you a follower of the MultiGod, Bhogi?« Hollydeva was irritated, but she had already suspected the Bhogi of being an old heretic ever since the Kalima incident.

»I am not a follower and not a believer at all, Hollydeva! I have always believed only in good food and beautiful women! See that one?«

Hollydeva saw a gracefully dancing, dark-skinned woman, probably about 20 years old. She sighed. With what kind of lecher was she traveling here? She surely wanted the rulers of the world to behave better than that!

»But I am not a beautiful woman!«

»Just wait a few more years, you'll be fine! Beauty comes from within! If you think you are beautiful, you will be! But I think you'd rather be inconspicuous like a nacharya! Instead of being stared at, you would prefer to be the observer!«

Hollydeva had to nod slightly. The Bhogi understood her all too well.

»But we are out of the station, so we're not going to Valhalla today?!«

»No, Valhalla doesn't exist anymore, Holly. But that's an entirely different story. Push me down that street, Romilly Street — that's where we have to go!«

It was a dark street. She had read somewhere along the way that they were in the Soho district. The Bhogi asked her to stop in front of a dark pub, which was inconspicuously located between a bookstore and a store, where music on round discs was probably available. "The Haughty Herring" was the name of the dive.

»Come on, we have to get in there! Inside is the entrance to the alley we want to go to!«

It was dark and a little eerie in the pub's guest room. There were about seven guests, who stood up, immediately looking suspiciously at the Bhogi and Hollydeva.

The landlord approached them. »We're closed! Private meeting!«

The Bhogi replied, »Yes. I am invited. I just have to see what I engraved back there on the tiled wall in my youth, when I had been here with one of the most beautiful women of her time, Boadica, you will remember. Yes, thank you, I will find the way myself!«

The Bhogi had given Hollydeva a sign, and she had pushed him past the baffled innkeeper to the tiled wall. Quickly he had hit some tiles with the walking stick he had with him. But nothing happened.

One of the guests approached. »The Bhogi, once again! We have changed the sequence, Mr. Nacharya! There will not be another visit of His Eminence to the Alley of the Tangents! Last time you robbed us and the loss was painful!«

The Bhogi had turned the wheelchair around to confront the man, who had a wooden stick in his hand.

»I must go to the alley and I must prevent an apprentice of yours from acquiring a certain wand! He'll only do mischief with it!«

»We'll take care of that ourselves! And I think we know who you're talking about here! The young Cevaine will not do any mischief, but will help the wizardeurs back to their old greatness! You mystics will hear and see more!«

The Bhogi examined the man and the other wizardeurs who gathered behind him. They all seemed to be bizarre figures, boldly dressed. On the street in front of the Herring, they would most likely generate rejection or laughter.

»Master Deekelly, don't be foolish! You know that you cannot or must not do anything against me!«

The person addressed laughed: »Times have changed, Nacharya Bhogi! The mages —who you call wizardeurs- are just regaining their power. We have a new hope, a new prince!«

The Bhogi continued to provoke the wizardeurs in the tavern, »A prince of the wizardeurs? Where is he supposed to come from? You have become barren!«

»Yes, but the curse laid upon us does not work in distant lands! And from those lands the prince came to us! And we heard of other neophytes who are on their way to Vowharts!«

»Oh, and they still stock up on the necessary equipment here?«

Deekelly realized that he had already revealed too much and raised the wand for a curse.

»You must do something now, Hollydeva!« the Bhogi whispered to Hollydeva.

»Me? What do you mean?« Hollydeva was surprised. What should she do against the magic of an experienced wizard in his own territory?

»Yes, that's why I brought you with me! You have powers! You can get us out of here safely! I was just bluffing! I am old and weak and have no more power!«

Hollydeva's mouth stayed open in amazement.

The wizard hurled his staff in their direction and shouted something that sounded like »Scabbers!« And it began to itch.

Hollydeva felt panic. What should she do against these superior forces? Where were allies here? Nowhere.

Why had the Bhogi brought her into this situation? Was he really so weak? Was it a test and she just failed dramatically?

Deekelly and the other wizards laughed loudly and gloatingly. She grabbed the wheelchair and pushed the Bhogi out of the Haughty Herring with vehemence.

Outside on Romilly Street, they paused.

»You did that wonderfully, Hollydeva! Splendid! You have shown them,« the Bhogi shouted back to her.

Splendid? Did he mean it ironically? Was running away really the option?

»I just pushed you out! I have not been able to do anything! I can't do any magic!«

»Running away is great magic!« laughed the Bhogi.

And what about the scabies?

»It itches!« she complained.

»Oh yes!« admitted the Bhogi. He pulled a magic wand from a hiding place on the side of the wheelchair, waved it over his head, made a big circle and shouted, »Get away!«

In fact, the unpleasant skin feeling was gone in an instant.