“Science and Magic. Most modern people see them as opposites; believing that Science works and Magic doesn’t; and that magic that appears to work is either a trick, or advanced science that most people don’t know about.” The speaker had milky white skin, green eyes, and long dark hair in nine braids entwined in silver. She wore a black dress belted about with a silver cord. About her head was a silver band carved with writhing figures and dark runes. She looked about twenty-five, and called herself Mifunwi.

Elanor had heard all this and more before, and simply nodded. The others hadn’t. Mifunwi, Elanor, Luke and Red had rescued them from a nightmare playground set up by some rogue gods for their own entertainment. The others had been plucked from their lives and imprisoned in the game for hundreds of years.

Elanor was a tall, rangy woman of African origin, taller than anyone else in the room. Her hair was still short from her battle with cancer the year before, but growing back. She had straightened it and caught it with clips at the back of her head, from which a pair of ornamental chopsticks jutted. She appeared to be in her late twenties, but was much older.

Layla, looking about thirty, pale skin, green eyes and longish black hair, commented “Then I must be a modern, because my culture knows that some magic works, and some doesn’t. Our wise people are discovering why some of it works. That’s science isn’t it?” Layla came from a culture that was a cross between Egyptian and ancient Greek culture. They had invented mathematics, geometry, and were discovering the scientific method. They had worked out she was about four hundred years old.

“Science means knowledge.” Mifunwi replied. “Science should be repeatable, like if I drop something it always falls to the ground.” She looked expectantly at the other two.

Siska, also thirtyish, Asiatic looking, but with short cropped blonde hair and grey eyes, nodded. “I must be from a modern culture too. We see magic having to do with demons and small gods, so it doesn’t always work.” Her culture was more like renaissance European, with a separation between science and religion and magic. They were empire builders. She was about six hundred years old.

Erlik, the only male present, disagreed. “I don’t see there is a difference. Everything has to do with the gods. They help or hinder everything you do.” He was also about thirty, with long blond hair and beard plaited. He was a real Viking, almost a thousand years old.

Mifunwi nodded to Elanor, who said “Erlik, you said to me once that you could build a boat with just your axe and your knife for tools. Modern people would regard boat building as science, you know what to do, you can teach others what to do, and they can produce the same results. The gods aren’t involved.”

Erlik eyes opened in surprise. “Boat building is a craft, but if you don’t sing the boat building songs, and you don’t propitiate the gods, then the boat will sink or break up. You have to sing the soul into the boat, so she becomes alive, and can swim through the water.”

“We have something similar with sword making.” Siska commented. “The smith performs rituals before and during the making of a sword, because the sword has a soul.”

“Do you think it doesn’t matter?” Erlik asked Elanor.

Elanor snorted. “Hey, I was illustrating Mifunwi’s point about the modern world view. I grew up in Africa, I know about the spells for making things. And Mifunwi and Luke have taught me a lot more than that. But the world you are in now, a lot of people don’t believe in magic, don’t believe in gods. We’ve talked about that.”

Mifunwi added “There are several religions that are dominant, and they forbid any magic. They teach that there is only one god, and all the rest are demons.”

“I still find that hard to believe!” Erlik replied. “All four of us know gods and goddesses exist.”

“Let me clarify what I mean by magic, or sorcery.” Mifunwi replied. “If it involves persuading the gods to be nice to you, that is religion. If it involves persuading anything sentient to obey you, then that is coercion or blackmail, or belief in a common cause. If it involves pulling a rabbit from a hat then that is tricks. Magic is different. Partly it is arranging the world around you as you want it. It can include talking with spirits, or magical beings. It can involve breaking the so called laws of science. It can involve helping others.”

“Everyone has some magical abilities.” Mifunwi continued. “If you are interested, we will teach you what we can, what you are interested in. We are already teaching Elanor.”

Siska and Layla looked at one another. “We both know some magic, from our homelands. We would like to learn what you can teach us.” Siska replied. Layla nodded her agreement.

Erlik sighed. “I don’t have much to do with magic, except what I’ve picked up over the years I spent in Valhalla. Maybe it is time I learned some more. I was growing very stale and very bored there. I may not be any good at it though.”

Mifunwi smiled at them. “The underlying principle of magic, or sorcery, is that there is an essence, a fabric, that underlies the whole world and everything in it. Everything is interconnected. It is possible to manipulate that fabric, and cause effects to other things. You don’t need any tools, or crystals, or magic wands, or potions, or anything else. All those things are simply props such as an actor might use on stage. They can help put you in the right frame of mind when you are learning, but you do not need them.”

Elanor put a hand to the chopsticks she wore in her hair. Mifunwi noticed and requested “Why don’t you tell us why you wear chopsticks in your hair? You don’t use them for eating.”

Elanor chuckled. “I can, but I don’t. Originally they were simply ornaments, and then when I got serious about karate they became weapons. And when you started teaching me about magic, they were convenient as wands. They still worry people when I do this.” In one swift movement she plucked one from her hair and brought it down to chest height, pointing it like a weapon.

“That is definitely a threatening movement.” Erlik commented. “But then I have seen just how dangerous you can be.”

“I still feel I have to point with something if I want to direct a spell at someone. The chopstick is convenient for that.”

Mifunwi laughed “You can use your finger.”

“Forgive me for asking,” Erlik asked deferentially “but you are a goddess, can you really teach us humans magic powers? I mean we have such limitations compared to you ...” he trailed off.

Mifunwi was looking at him with an amused expression. “Elanor asked a similar question. Our powers cannot be taught, but there are many things humans can learn. We have spent a very long time living among humans and wearing human bodies. We like to think we have a good understanding of what it means to be human. Besides, you are not the first we’ve taught.”

For the first lesson, Mifunwi had them sit in pairs, with their hands held palm out towards each other, left to right, right to left. Elanor was quite familiar with this, but was here mainly to make up the numbers. “After a few minutes you should feel a tingling in your right hand, and a coolness in your left. That is your energy flowing out of your right and into your partner’s left. If you have energy then you can perform magic.”

“What if you don’t have energy?” Erlik asked.

“Then you are dead. Anything living has energy, and many things you may not think of as alive also have energy, such as crystals, rocks, metals. Seeing this energy is something that will come much later, but when you can see it you will understand what I mean. For now, I just want you to feel the energy flow, so you know it exists, and know that this is what you will work with.”

“Males and females have complementary energies.” Elanor commented. This was one of many things Luke had taught her.

“Yes, and you can use sexual practices to share and balance your energies with your partner.” Mifunwi amplified. “Sex is also one way of increasing the flow of energy. But that will be for later lessons. For this lesson I want to talk about the chakras, and the energy body.”

During her talk she had them place their hands over each others’ chakras, and her own, to feel the difference in energies. Then she walked away, turning to face them. “Now I will show you. Elanor, could you step over here please?”

Elanor did so, and everything around her seemed to be glowing with colored lights. There was also a mild electric tingling sensation through her body.

Mifunwi spoke again. “Now you can see I have highlighted each chakra and the major energy pathways on Elanor. With training you will be able to see this and more by yourselves.” She pointed out each chakra again, and the main pathways. Then she clicked her fingers and the show vanished.

Mifunwi placed her hands together as if in prayer, but with a small gap between them. “Your homework today is to practice doing this, and feeling the energy flows. Practice for at least ten minutes at a time, and at least five times a day. When you finish each session, rub your hands together and then shake them.” Mifunwi did this, flicking them as if shaking drops of water off. “And girls, try in pairs, and try with Erlik as well, to see if you can detect a different quality in his energy. Erlik, ask Rene” the estate’s diminutive beer maker “to practice with you once or twice, and see if you can detect a difference between his energies and those of the girls. That’s all for today.”