Avatars-9

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Confronting Necessity, Awakening and Training Chris and Jon

The girls led Chris and Jon inside and introduced them to Athena’s family. None of them had ever seen the two before, and silently enquired if the two were active or latent. Naomi, particularly, eying Jon with feminine interest. It was an irony that a psi could sense a person’s potential but not determine immediately if that person had tapped it or not. A psi actually had to touch the person, mind to mind, to tell—and of course risk catalyzing a latent potential. By saying that they had not checked, Artemis and Athena only confirmed that they had not witnessed either friend utilizing psi.

Occasionally, the Families approved of waking someone, usually when they had exceptional untapped potential. In the past few generations the Families had grown to the point that their children constantly kept an eye out for such promising latents, in search of fresh blood. Naomi, in particular, had an interest in finding and marrying a virgin—a popular description of a latent psionic—and breaking him in herself. Chris sensed her interest and asserted her claim on Jon, by taking his hand and interposing her body between him and Naomi.

Naomi’s eyes took on a wicked gleam and she allowed herself a smug smile. The promise of competition only enhanced her interest, filling her with anticipation. Victor came out to find out what the commotion was, drawn more in search of Vincent who had excused himself to meet his daughter’s friends and had lingered to watch his middle daughter finally taking interest in a man. Victor recognized the couple immediately, only the last time he had seen them they had been a couple of boys.

Victor confronted the girls, demanding they explain Chris’s condition. Naomi inquired what was wrong with Chris and raised her eyebrows in amusement at the answer. The story of Artemis’s metamorphosis in front of normal witnesses was dragged out. Victor had initially assumed that Chris’s transformation had been spontaneous, and hoped that the girls would confirm that, but Artemis admitted freely to changing her. Victor sighed deeply and gave her the lecture.

When Victor got to the part where he commanded Artemis to change the neo-girl back, Chris stridently opposed him. Victor turned to confront her. He gave her a lecture about the dangers of playing games with the bodies and minds of latents. Chris asserted that it had not been a game, but a miracle cure. She was forced to explain the medical condition she had suffered under, and how Artemis had saved her from a life of hell. Jon backed her up, having known what a pitiful and unhappy boy Chris had been.

Vincent, as a doctor, asked Chris if she could support her claims, and Chris went out to her car to produce the files and records she kept in a traveling folder, since she often had to travel halfway across the state for tests, treatment and therapy. With support for her story, the adults agreed that she should not be changed back. That would be unusually cruel. Artemis was still given a sound tongue lashing for failing to consult an adult, or checking Chris’s story, before acting.

To Chris, they explained that the world did not willingly accept miraculous transformations. Because her condition and treatment had been documented, it was possible to introduce her to their own community as a post operative female—with Vincent able to assert that she had privately arranged for and followed a regimen of hormone replacement, followed by surgery performed by him. Vincent was known as the best reconstructive surgeon in the business, who lamentably devoted himself primarily to researching and developing surgical techniques. Officially, he generally worked with hand-selected candidates, who received free treatment in exchange for serving as the test beds for new procedures. Such would be the official case with Chris.

Chris would have to instruct his parents to come down and sign of on the agreement, since Chris was a minor. That way Chris would be able to correct his official identity legally, and enter school with Artemis and Athena in the fall. Typically, post-operative transsexuals elected to move and obscure their past, so the official story was only intended for bureaucratic consumption. To the rest of the world, she was free to present herself as a natural born female. To do otherwise was to court disaster. He recommended she not get pregnant. The problem with her cover was, if she had children and someone bothered to check her background, unpleasant questions would be aroused.

That was a potential problem. The immediate problem was, Chris, Jon, and by necessity Chris’s parents, would all be fully aware of the truth about psi. A thousand, or five hundred, or even one hundred years ago, a psi stood a chance of escaping the pyre if a witch-hunt got started. In the modern world, a witch-hunt was still possible, but more likely to provoke a kind of war only the Bible hinted at. Psionics survived in the modern world by remaining invisible and intangible. When normal people noticed them, stories inevitably got started, and inevitably spread to those who waited hungrily for leads to true psionics, and a hunt would be started.

Chris and Jon were good people, but it was not their own necks at risk. Psionics who killed normals to keep their secrets were the worst threat to psionics, and were hunted down by their own kind. There would be no threats to keep Chris and Jon in line, or silent, inscrutable eliminations to negate the threat they posed to the psionics they knew about. There was a simpler, more reliable way to keep normals from betraying psionics. Turn them into psionics themselves. The potential was universal; the only secret was tapping into it.

Chris and Jon were surprised. They asked if they really had the potential to do the things Artemis had demonstrated that first, eventful day. Victor explained that potential for psi had evolved before humans had. In humans it was constantly being refined and enhanced, for the most part by the very pressures that typically kept if from becoming fully expressed. Psionics like Artemis were perhaps one in a billion, but latents with the same level of potential she possessed were closer to one in a million. Chris and Jon were in that category.

Naomi had already guessed that, and the question she asked whiffed of disappointment. She asked if her parents were saying they were going to take the two of them in and initiate them. Under the circumstances, there was no option. They needed to be awakened to their potential and trained to harness and use it properly. Naomi sighed and realized her plans for Jon were not compatible with that, and she did not dare interfere with her parents on such a sensitive point. Chris and Jon were warned, in the same way that psionics policed themselves to weed out casual killers, they also weeded out those who could not control their own power. They really had to be careful, learn quickly and correctly, and make no mistakes.

Except in the rare instance where a psi and a normal are certain of each other, psionics did not talk openly about the existence, application, articulation, or expression of their ability. They would have to learn the two basic abilities, what they would call telepathy and telekinesis, right away. They were the abilities most commonly expressed in children, and least likely to be noticed if they made small slips. Their first experience with both abilities would come from the people in that room. But that would have to begin in the morning.

It was already late, and people needed to get to bed for school and work the next day. The meeting was adjourned, and the four of them dismissed to bathe and go to bed. The girl’s bath was governed by Japanese custom. Any or all the girls in the house might be in there at any time, scrubbing down in an large open stall with four faucets and shower heads, or soaking in the huge basin across from it. It could be entered from the hall through the dressing room, or directly from the girls’ bedrooms or the utility room. Athena, Artemis and Chris washed each other down and then retired to the big tub to talk.

Jon was taken by Victor to the guest bathroom, across the hall from the master bedroom in opposite wing of the house. Jon took a quick shower, and considered what had happened that day. He had spent his life pursuing the acme of martial arts, chi. He had already begun to learn how to focus and channel his body’s natural energy. When he had first confronted psi, he had actually sensed it, recognized it. Now he was going to learn to harness it. He had meant to discuss this with Chris, so he slipped into shorts and shirt and went looking for her.

On his way out, he confronted Kim, who told him the sleeping arrangements. Athena, Artemis and Chris, being female in mind and body, were tripled up in Athena’s room. Jon, as the only guy, had to sleep in guest room—with its two double beds—with Victor. It was that or give Jon the couch in the den. He accepted the spare bed in the guest room. He explained that he needed to talk to Chris for a minute, when she tried to lead him back the way he had come. Kim assured him that Chris would be in the bath for a while, and handed him a stack of sheets and blankets.

Kim went in to bathe herself and told Chris to go talk to Jon, when she was done. Chris borrowed a robe from Athena and went to the guest room to find out what her best and boy friend wanted. He had lay down on the bed after making it up to wait for her, and had fallen asleep. Chris cuddled up next to him on the bed, and tried to tease him awake. Victor walked in and chased her out of the room before he did.