

CHAPTER 43

A FEMININE LUMOCIL AN ODDITY OF THE NATRURAL WORLD

Dheago turns around ever so slowly and then takes a few steps back. As to what this thing is, he doesn't want to know, but he is not about to take any chances. If it hadn't been for his speed and agility, he might have suffered another demoralizing blow. He dives for cover, only seconds before a long glutinous snout reaches out and attaches itself to his rear end, but a few soggy weeds are not an impediment to what this creature has in mind.

'Get lost you stupid-looking thing.'

From the look on her face, it's apparent that she is appalled by such language.

'How dare you,' she says. 'I wasn't going to hurt you.'

'You could have fooled me,' Dheago says.

'What sort of thing are you anyway?'

'Thing, who are you calling a thing?' she says. 'How rude is that. At least I know what I am.'

'What are you? That's what I'd like to know.'

'Come out and show yourself. If you think I'm a freak of nature, you should get a good look at yourself.'

'Well then, what are you?' she says, emphasizing the word **you** as if he's the most loathsome creature she has ever seen.

'We're boys,' Addric says, 'male-type things.'

'Male what, omnivores, carnivores or herbivores, it makes a difference you know.'

'Human beings,' Dheago says. 'What else could we be?'

'Ah, all of the above, I'm not used to your sort around here. I just leap at anything that moves, hoping for the best you know.'

As to her pedigree, Dheago could not even begin to imagine. Even a trained scientist would have trouble working that out. She is essentially a gelatinous creature with wobbly arms and legs. Her most visible feature is a pair of overly large eyes with long flowing lashes, but she also has a retractable nose that probably serves several different functions.

'My name is Pikki Souliana de Breeze,' she says in a demure but lingering fashion.

'I should have guessed it would be something like that,' Dheago whispers to Addric.

'I heard that, so what's your name, smarty pants?'

'Dheago Sandoval,' he says between clenched teeth.

'And you,' she says to Addric. 'What's yours?'

'I'm Addric, Addric Sharano,' he says a little halfheartedly.

'Well boys, it looks as if we have lost our way. Did we make a wrong turn somewhere along the line, perhaps?'

'Maybe and maybe not, it just depends, that's all,' says a defiant Dheago, the acidic tone in his voice patently obvious.

But Pikki, it seems, can be equally as venomous.

'We're not the classic adventurers, are we?' she says in a tone with a distinctly offensive edge.

'We haven't done all that bad for city boys,' he says. 'So, where are we?'

'You're here, of course,' she says with a wincing glare. 'Where do you think you are?'

'Where is here, Vela-Rishan or somewhere else?'

'You're here, exactly where you are standing. What else do you need to know?'

'Where exactly are we standing?' Dheago cries out in frustration.

In the space of a few minutes, Pikki has managed to push all the wrong buttons, but Dheago has already had enough of her unctuous platitudes.

'I don't know boys, it's where we live, you know.'

'And who, pray tell, are we?'

'We are who we are,' she says mysteriously.

Apart from the prestige of being at the top of the local food chain, Pikki refers to herself as a Lumocil, a feminine Lumocil, an item of information that doesn't help much at all.

'Okay, that's one less mystery to worry about,' Dheago says.

'Does anyone else live here?'

'Of course, they do and there's a food supply as well, if that's what you're getting at.'

'No,' he groans. 'It's not, you...'

'Be careful,' Addric says as he places a restraining hand on Dheago's shoulder. For all he knows, Pikki could have a dark side.

'Temper, temper Dheago, take it easy now.'

'I'll show you around,' she says. 'Will that be to your liking?'

'You might as well. We've got nothing better to do.'

'Follow me, but don't make any loud noises, otherwise they might hear you.'

'And what are you talking about this time?' Dheago says.

'Flaxophilians, of course, what else would I be talking about?'

‘And what in God’s name are they?’ says a now completely baffled Dheago.

‘Keep your voice down,’ says an irritated Pikki. ‘Or you will find out soon enough.’

Dheago has almost blown it and Pikki isn’t happy about it at all. Unfortunately, the battle lines have been drawn and it’s far too late for a peace treaty. As of this moment, they are both under the influence of the dark side.

‘Why did you have to do that?’ she says.

For all he knows, this could be a standard Lumocil fantasy. Pikki’s demons might be nothing other than a glutinous thought in her strangely shaped head, but she is obviously worried about these flaxo things.

‘They’re on their way,’ she says.

They dive under an overhanging ledge, and watch closely as a flock of airborne projectiles swoop overhead with aerodynamic precision.

‘That’s them, the annoying little pests.’

‘If I am correct, they are actually mutants,’ Dheago says. ‘How did they get in here?’

‘What’s a mutant?’ Pikki says.

‘Winged bacteria, of course, what else?’

It would be a complete waste of time trying to explain that they are a race of vipers commonly found in computer games and Dheago doesn’t even bother.

‘They remind me of bats,’ Addric says. ‘I never realised that before.’

‘If you want to see bats, I will show you bats, but they won’t be able to see you.’

‘And why is that,’ Dheago says.

‘Because they can’t get in here, that’s why.’

‘But they’re already in here, aren’t they?’ he says as he glares at Pikki through blood red eyes.

‘Of course not,’ she snaps back. ‘But they are always trying to break through our barriers.’

‘What barriers are you talking about?’

This guy has to be the most dimwitted creature she has ever met in her life.

‘Are you blind as well? Look around, big boy.’

They haven’t been wandering around in a drainage canal as they first thought, but they are surrounded by huge stone pillars as far as the eye can see.

‘I would say that this is some sort of underwater city,’ Dheago says. ‘What have we got ourselves into now Addric?’

‘I don’t really know Dheago, but I’m sure it will be okay.’

‘And it will be gentlemen,’ says a voice from behind.

They turn around, only to see four barely visible, watery apparitions, four young men wearing distinctive black cloaks. As to whether they are soldiers or palace guards, they have no idea. But as they will eventually find out, they are actually Yumi Masters.

‘If you would like to follow us,’ one of the men says. ‘Someone is expecting you.’

‘And who would that be?’ Addric says.

‘There is no need to be alarmed, Addric and Dheago, we have been sent to collect you.’

‘By who,’ says an increasingly suspicious Dheago.

‘At Wimple’s request, of course.’

‘At long last,’ he sighs, ‘a rescue party.’

‘So, what are those things?’ Pikki says

‘They’re friends of a sort.’

‘You have very funny-looking friends, don’t you?’

Yes, and we meet more of them everywhere we go. If you hang around for a while, I’ll introduce you to a few.’

‘Really,’ she says. ‘Ooh, I’d love that.’

For as long as Pikki can remember, her most fervent desire has been to visit the world outside. But to get a glimpse of that beautiful city she had to climb the highest rock in the area. It was hard going for a dainty little Lumocil, but it was always worth the effort.

This will be the beginning of a grand new adventure and Pikki is in Lumocil heaven as she follows along behind.

‘Addric, wait for me,’ she cries. ‘I’m coming too.’

He looks around, only to see one of the most heartbreaking things he has ever seen in his life. Pikki’s head is flopping back and forth, her overly long lashes are awash with a cascade of tears, and her wobbly little legs are moving faster than they have ever done before.

‘You can’t come with us Pikki. You know that,’ he says. ‘You don’t belong in our world.’

If a look of unbridled loathing from a psychopathic Lumocil could kill, Addric would have been vaporised there and then.

‘After all I have done for you,’ she says as she struggles to hold back a wall of tears.

Unspeakable profanities are soaring through her mind, fanning the flames of a Lumocil insurrection. Every cell in her body is ready to lash out there and then, to throw Addric to the ground and give him the flogging he so justly deserves.

‘What hope does a poor defenseless Lumocil have against the likes of you?’ she cries. ‘I have feelings too, you know.’

Addric doesn’t have time to soothe her troubled soul, so he blows her a kiss. After all, she is a sentient being and deserving of his compassion.

One day in the not-too-distant future, Addric will meet a man who will share a philosophy that he will take to heart. Adartha, Prince of the Angelic Realm of Ra-Silonay is of the belief that we are all one and Addric has always believed the same.

When she eventually regains her composure, Pikki turns to face a more familiar world. Deep down, she knows that Addric is right. She has no place in his world, but she does have a place in her own.

‘It’s a good thing I didn’t go with them,’ she says.

‘I would probably end up as a circus freak in a sideshow, but I would never be bothered by those pesky flaxophilians again.’

As she wanders off in search of greener pastures, Pikki is side-tracked by yet another appetizing little tidbit. It’s not much in the way of sustenance, but one crunchy little critter is always worth the effort.

‘Unlike any passing stranger,’ she snuffles. ‘At least they appear with monotonous regularity.’

THE END OF PART TWO