

Sunlight Through The Clouds (An Emergence Tale)

Book 1: Rising Sun

Chapter 1: World Changed

It has been a few weeks since the “mystics” revealed themselves to the world. World governments try their best to keep their citizens calm as they each work to bring these magical beings smoothly into normal society, although there remain many parts of the world which still hunt them like monsters. As for the countries supposedly trying to make peace with the mystics there was plenty of mixed reactions to be had. Many people took up to protesting in front of parliament, holding up picket signs reading “Animals aren't people” and “I ain't working with no freaks” to name a couple. Concerned parents complained to school boards about their children going to school with monsters. At the same time there were also people willing to accept these new beings with open arms. And then there were those who didn't even care. As long as things didn't interrupt their daily lives or make things more difficult for them then they didn't care.

Stephen fell into the accepting category. The young man stood there, listening intently as the speaker up on the podium spoke, currently discussing to everyone about the mystic camp site currently being set up in the outskirts of their city of Winnipeg. He was at one of the many information sessions being held across the city about this new development in the world, the one he was attending being held at the nearby school gym. He still couldn't believe there was an elf, let alone a woman elf wearing a formal business suit, standing at the podium talking to everyone about mythical creatures trying to settle into normal society amongst regular people. It felt like he was in a very vivid dream. Living alongside dragons, elves and gryphons was something he always wished for and he relished the opportunity. Not everyone shared Stephen's enthusiasm, however.

"Are these creatures dangerous? I mean, we're talking about giant flying reptiles that breath fire among other things. And what about Chewbacca there? He looks like he could rend people in two without breaking a sweat!" A middle aged man wearing a red striped shirt shouted, pointed at the Sasquatch standing beside the elf woman which most people in the room were watching warily. Thus far he hadn't spoke but simply stood by his elven companion. One could almost assume he was a bodyguard for her. No one was sure if he was a "he" for that matter.

“Yeah! Why put this camp of creatures so close to the city!” Shouted another in the crowd.

This time one of the city officials took the floor. Stephen didn't catch their names coming in but it didn't matter so much. To him they were as interchangeable as anyone else in the same role as they only seemed to be doing this as a formality. "We understand your concerns but rest assured there is no danger from these mystics coming to join our fair city. I'd also like to point out that there won't be any dragons living in the area. And who can blame them for not wanting to live in a city nicknamed 'winterpeg' , right?" The old man joked, though only half-heartedly and only getting a few chuckles from the crowd. He straightened his tie and cleared his throat. "Rest assured we'll be taking every measure to assure that the transition will be safe for both you and the newcomers. As for why the camp will be so close to the city is due to the land currently being the most accessible and most convenient to set up living space for our newest members to our community."

Stephen rolled his eyes at that. Just another way of saying that the land was the cheapest and an area they were most willing to let go off he thought as he listened to the rest of the questions and answers being tossed back and forth. He was feeling a bit disappointed that there weren't gonna be any dragons living nearby. Out of all creatures that were once thought as myth those were his favorite. He would have killed for a chance to see one in person. But then again his more pessimistic side also considered how badly such an encounter could go. He shook his head and resumed listening to the questions and answers being tossed back and forth as well as the subject of classification, referring to everyday humans as Class 1's, human-like mystics as class 2's, and the more animal-like mystics as class 3's. He was also at least grateful that there were as many, if not more people that were genuinely curious about these newcomers to their lives, particularly among the younger members of the audience, as there were people who feared this new group and the changes to come.

Soon the session was over and everyone was sent home. Stephen considered lingering for a chance to ask the elf representative some questions without the crowd but couldn't work up the courage to do so. Her hairy body guard glaring at him when he tried to approach didn't help much either. So he just grabbed a pamphlet and left for home. It was fairly brisk outside being late October, trees almost leafless, the world painted in shades of orange and brown. He kind of enjoyed the crunching of dried leaves under his feet as he walked while reading over the pamphlet which pretty much went over what he heard at the info session he just left. He looked over things like the arrangement of the camps and new laws being put into place to protect normal humans and mystics alike. The pamphlet also went over that current laws will still affect everyone equally. In simple terms no mystics were allowed to harm normal folk and vica-versa.

Stephen sighed, "I wish I didn't chicken out back there. So much I could have

asked. Like what kinds of mystics are out there. Granted her friend didn't seem to keen on people getting too close but... ugh, why did I have to chicken out back there?" The wind picked up a little as he walked home and mumbled to himself, causing him to shiver despite having a jacket on. "Brrr... glad they hosted in the school so I didn't have to walk far. Definitely gonna be a cold winter this year. Hope the shelters will be warm enough for those moving into that encampment." He said to himself quietly as he walked up to his house, pulling out his keys and opening the door.

A black husky/collie cross barked at him from atop the stairs. Stephen shook his head and rolled his eyes. "It's me, Lily. Quit your barking." he said to the dog. Lily simply sat there, wagging her tail, raising her paw at him as if expecting him to shake it. He chuckled and tossed his shoes to the side, climbing up the stairs a little to scratch her behind the ears. "Such a big suck." He smiled, happily petting his dog before fully coming upstairs and peeking into the kitchen. "Hey mom, I'm home."

A woman in her mid 30's turned around, holding one of the plates she was drying. "Oh, hello Son. How did that meeting thing go." She said, resuming her dish drying.

"Oh, I think things were handled well enough. Community is kind of divided, though." said Stephen while rummaging through the cupboards.

"Hey! Go wash your hands before getting into anything." His mother gave him a stern look. He sighed and walked off to the bathroom which was close by. "Did they say where this beast encampment is gonna be?" She shouted at him from the kitchen.

"Mystic, not beast! And they made mention it'll be just outside the north-east end of the city. Not exactly a prime living spot if you ask me." Stephen shouted back, shutting off the water and drying his hands after washing them. He briefly stopped to look himself in the mirror. His dark brown hair was running long at the back again, just touching the collar of his grey sweater. His blue eyes gazed over his roundish face, frowning at the sight of his acne covered cheeks. He noted he also needed to shave those scraggly hairs he called a beard and mustache. He then turned away and walked back into the kitchen, grabbing a bag of chips. "Anyways, going downstairs to my room. Left a pamphlet for you and dad on the table. I'm assuming dad and Ryan are at work and Adam is at school, right?"

"Yes. They are all out. Means I got some peace and quiet for a while. Go and play your games, Steph. Just keep quiet down there." His mom finished up the dishes and walked towards the living room, sitting down on the couch and flicking on the TV, Lily hopping up onto the couch with her and curling up beside.

"I will, mom. And I don't game all the time, ya know." Stephen said exasperatedly

as he walked downstairs and into the basement to his room on the other side. Closing the door behind himself he went straight for his computer and turned it on. It was true he was a bit of an addict when it came to video games, given his substantial hoard of them in both physical and digital forms, but he did find time to do other things. Right now gaming could wait as he opened up his chat programs to get in touch with his friends to discuss current events. He also checked some of the sites he frequented often to how much crazier things have gotten. Ever since the emergence event the entire internet has been abuzz with talk about mythical creatures. Everywhere from Facebook to Reddit had been flooded with discussions from how we should welcome mystics to the possible dangers to even how magick worked. On Twitter and Facebook things were even sillier with people starting up a metagame of "spot the mystic", an attempt to find any mystics currently using such services. Stephen thought this was pretty stupid though since anyone claiming to be open about their mythical heritage could easily be lying and any mystic not open about it could easily hide thanks to the anonymity of the internet.

Dav: Murrrp!

Rav: Mrew

Stephen smiled, spotting the messages flashing on his screen. It was his friend Dafydd whom is called Dav for short, and his boyfriend Ravtrag. He guessed they just got back from the information gatherings in their respective areas. He typed back to them.

Mehl: Rawr!

To anyone who didn't know them, such a way to greet each other would seem strange, but to them it was almost routine. They all knew each other beyond the computer screen but online they were more free to express how they were inside. For the three were furies, people who liked to represent themselves as anthropomorphic animals, and otherkin, people who considered themselves tied to a non-human form spiritually, in their case the form being that of a dragon. All three of them had an image of a dragon to represent themselves online as well. Dav's was that of a red, dog sized dragon with a gator-like snout. Rav's was a red eastern dragon with a flowing golden mane. As for Stephen... "she" represented herself as a golden female dragon named "Mehlahphuse". Why female is something Stephen couldn't explain even to himself. It just felt right to him. Together the three were as close as can be. Especially with Rav and himself, the two referring to each other as mates, loving each other very much both online and off. Stephen started typing again, wondering how his friend's days have gone thus far.

Mehl: Hey, guys. How did the information things go for you?

Rav: Mrrm, it was ok I guess. Was very crowded, though. Wish Mehls was there. -nuzzles my Mehl-

Mehl: Well, I told you that you could have joined me down here. -nuzzles back-

Dav: -nuzzles snouts- Things didn't go so well on my end. Nothing but people arguing and getting all paranoid. Too many religious jerks in the crowd. >.=.<

Mehl: Well, tis not like the camps are being placed out there anywhere near your town. Just in a really terrible spot outside of the city. Well, in my opinion anyways. >.=.>

Rav: It does seem kind of interesting that all this is happening so close to Halloween. Btw, Mehl, have you heard anything about a Halloween party from the local furs? Any postings on the forums or facebook at all?

Stephen pondered as he read Rav's response. It was true that the local furs hosted a Halloween party at the end of October each year normally. Though he had yet to hear anything about one this year. He took a quick look through facebook and forums but so far nothing was posted. But then it was still a bit early so likely things were still being planned out.

Mehl: Nothing posted yet. Then again it isn't that close to Halloween yet, hun. Still plenty of things likely needed to be prepared and planned out before someone hosts a party

Dav: Well, I'm sure we'll here from someone soon.

Mehl: Anyways, I'm gonna head out for a bit. Gotta do run some errands and gonna check out some shops. Will see you two later.

Dav: Ok, Mehl. See you later. -nuzzles-

Rav: Take care, love. -kisses-

Stephen smiled and logged off. He was glad to have a friend and mate like those two. He didn't know what life would be like without them. It always made him wonder how life would have been like for them if they had been born as their perceived dragon selves. But for now such thoughts would wait as he grabbed his things, put on his hoodie, and headed out towards the mall not too far from his home after letting his mother know he was leaving, once again taking in the brisk autumn air.

"Ugh, that bank line was waaaay to long." Stephen said as he made his way back home. He had just finished off his errands by paying off a couple things at the bank and spent almost thirty minutes waiting in line. On top of that there was all that mall noise he had to deal with. He was just to be done with it all and heading back home. "Had to choose today of all days to go to the mall. Just glad I can get back home before supper at least."

He walked down the street, passing by the many various shops along it. It was when he was close to home he saw an old man, likely in his 60's, unloading boxes off a moving truck and into a building that had burned down some years ago due to arson but was fortunately restored. From the looks of what the man was carrying into the building Stephen guessed he was opening an antique shop or something, seeing items poking out of some of the boxes that look expensive at least from where he stood. He was about to just walk off and continue home but he couldn't bring himself to not help the guy as some of those boxes he was carrying looked quite heavy and the man certainly wasn't in his prime. So Stephen decided he would offer to lend him a hand, walking towards the man and waving in greeting.

"Hello, sir. Could you use a ha-" Stephen was cut short by a large brown dog, about half the size of him, leaping at him from behind the doors to the shop, growling threateningly at him. Its pointed ears were lowered as it glared him, warning him to back away, a warning Stephen was happy to oblige as he started backing away slowly.

"Gygax! Calm down boy! That is no way to treat someone willing to help." The old man said to his dog, gently patting the dog's head, calming the beast. The dog leaned into the pets, but still watched Stephen warily. The man himself seemed to be going for the stereotypical wizard look, the man having a big white flowing beard adorning his face, long white hair on his head, and wearing flowing light blue robes. His brown eyes were soft and joyful as he smiled at the young man before him. "I see you are a kind passerby wishing to give an old man some help unpack his things, correct?"

"Well... uh... yeah. I saw you lifting those heavy boxes and I couldn't bring myself to just walk by without at least offering a hand." Stephen said, softly rubbing the back of his head nervously. "You setting up shop here, Mr....?"

"Please, call me Jergo. And yes I am. Just need to bring my wares inside and place them where they need to go and I'll be ready to open for business in no time." Jergo smiled proudly.

"Heh, sounds like you got yourself set up pretty fast. Would have thought it would have taken days to get a store like this all fixed up and cleaned before being able to bring your stuff in and open up shop. And I certainly hadn't even seen any sign of this place even being sold recently." Stephen said, lightly stroking his chin in thought.

Jergo merely kept smiling, grabbing another box. "Oh, I have my resources. Also helps to be a wizard too." The old man grinned and chuckled as he walked inside the store.

Stephen paused for a moment after hearing that, letting go of the box he was just about to take from the truck. "Hold on a sec! You are a wizard?" Stephen asked, confused by how upfront Jergo was about the subject. "First off, why would you go around telling people that? Aren't mystics the kind to not want to attract attention to themselves? Secondly, if you truly are a wizard can you prove it?" Though he knew now that magick and magi did exist he was still gonna have a hard time believing that anyone that outspoken about such things was what he or she claimed till proof was provided.

Jergo walked back out, still grinning from ear to ear. "To answer your first question, why should I hide it? Everyone knows that wizards and mythical creatures exist now. I don't see much point in lying anymore. Besides, I find that people will trust you more if you don't try to hide things from them. Not to mention I feel that if people knew this shop was being run by a wizard they'd be at least inclined to take a look out of curiosity. As for wanting proof..." The old man pondered for a sec, stroking his beard. He then got a twinkle in his eye as he looked like he had come up with an idea. "Why don't you help me finish unloading my wares and I'll prove that I am what I claim by showing you my specialty items I'll be putting up for sale."

"Specialty items, huh? Alright, you got me curious now. I'll get your stuff inside and then you show me this product of yours. Then we'll see how wizardly you are." Stephen smirked and picked up a box, bringing it inside.

It took them about half an hour but they soon got everything inside. Gygax didn't bother Stephen anymore after the initial warning the dog gave him earlier, simply laying about now in a quiet corner where he could keep an eye on things which made it easier for the young man to work. Stephen wiped the sweat from his forehead, a bit exhausted from the work. He then turned to the old merchant. "Alright, Jergo, time to hold your end of the deal. Lets see what is so special about these products you mentioned."

Jergo nodded and motioned for Stephen to follow him as he made his way into the back room. Once in the room Jergo walked up to a large wooden box which must have been brought inside before Stephen arrived as he did not recall seeing it inside the truck. The old man opened the box up and pulled out what looked like some sort of avian

costume.

"That's it? Your special magical items are mundane costumes?" Stephen asked, not fully convinced as he inspected the costume a bit closer. It looked well made, he'd grant the so-called wizard that, but it didn't look magical at all.

Jergo's smile never faltered. "Oh ye of little faith, these aren't as normal as you'd think. Why don't you take this one and put it on in the washroom over there?" Jergo pointed to the washroom just to the left. "I promise you won't be disappointed with what you will see."

Stephen pondered for a moment before gently taking the costume into his hands. The material that covered the outer layer costume felt very soft and comforting to the touch. He swore this was starting to feel like some of the stories he had read in the past online, particularly those involving transformation. But he kept that knowledge to himself and took the suit into the washroom, closing the door behind himself. He took one more look at the costume. It appeared to be some form of anthropomorphic blue jay costume and it looked like it was one whole piece, all the limbs and head attached to the body with only a single zipper on the front. Holding it up and looking inside the suit did look like it could fit but it looked tight enough that he'd have to remove his clothes in order to slide inside. Deciding to get this over quickly he took off his clothes as fast as he could and started putting the suit on legs first. Surprisingly the suit was fitting on comfortably. He assumed it must have been a lucky guess on Jergo's part to find a suit that was his size, not realizing the suit was actually resizing itself to better fit around its wearer.

Soon enough Stephen was fully into the costume, grabbing the head of the suit and placing it over his own, the costume head fitting on nice and snug. After zipping the suit shut Stephen took the time to examine himself in the mirror. He found it amazing how clearly he could see through the eyes of the costume without seeing his own in the reflection. And the costume did look amazing on him, even if it did seem a bit effeminate, something he personally didn't mind but wouldn't really want others, save for a few, to see him like this. Still, there was nothing magical about this costume from as far as he could tell. With a shrug he moved to take off the suit to give back to Jergo... but found he couldn't find the zipper anywhere on his chest.

Stephen scratched at his chest in confusion. He was sure the zipper wasn't that well hidden when he put the suit on. In fact the suit felt fluffier than he originally thought it was. Looking down at himself he noticed that the material that made the outer layer of the costume looked more realistic than what he first perceived, like it was made from real feathers rather than fake ones. He knew it was fairly realistic looking before he put it on but it wasn't this realistic. At least, he thought it wasn't. Suddenly he started

feeling strange sensations flow through his body. His mouth and lips felt a little stiff for some reason and he lost all feeling in his ears. On top of that he oddly felt thinner around her waist while his chest felt more pronounced. He looked down at his feet covered by the three-toed talons of the bird costume, feeling like he was missing a few toes of his own. He flexed his toes and was surprised by how well he could curl his toes, able to curl them almost like a real bird. While he did find what he was experiencing to be fascinating there was a nagging feeling in the back of his mind that something wasn't right here, that what he was seeing and feeling didn't match up to what he should be seeing and feeling. He quickly turned back to the mirror and almost gasped at what was staring right back at him. Instead of seeing himself in an effeminate looking anthro blue jay costume he found himself being stared back at a truly female anthro avian.

There was no mistaking the femininity of the avian in the mirror, long eyelashes adorning luscious blue eyes that blinked in timing with his own blinks, body flowing into curves a supermodel would kill for, chest pushed out in almost a breast-like fashion. Looking over himself once more he noticed how slender his arms and legs looked, noting that his hips were also wider. He took one feathered hand which was looking almost like a full wing and brought it up to his chest, softly squeezing it, gasping softly at how real it felt to the touch, like he wasn't wearing a costume at all. His other hand brushed by the tail feathers of the suit and his eyes went wide in surprise as he felt his hand brush over the very tips of them. He decided to grab one and give it a tug, chirping a bit in pain as he tugged a bit hard. He quickly covered his beak as he realized he had just chirped, quickly turning to the mirror and moving his hands away, opening his beak to see he could see straight down his throat instead of seeing his human mouth like he should. He tried to tug at his suit to find another way to get it off but soon stopped as it felt like he was tugging at his own flesh rather than the costume itself. He quickly turned around and opened the door to the washroom to find Jergo standing just outside.

"Oh good, I was just about to knock to check if everything is alright. I presume you are enjoying the new look, yes?" The old man smiled brightly, looking pleased at what he saw.

"What is going on? Why does the costume feel so real? EEP!" Stephen covered his beak again after it took a second to realize how feminine his voice sounded. "And why do I sound like a girl?!?"

"Why I told you that I was a mage, didn't I? That costume there is one of many I've worked very hard to make over the years. It gives the wearer a more in-depth experience as what it is like to BE their costumes." Jergo said, sounding very proud of his creation.

"So your costumes turn people into what they are wearing?" Stephen asked, a

little flustered and embarrassed by the situation he was in. While it was true he had fantasized about being female, given his dragon self was also female, he certainly wasn't gonna let this crazy old man know that.

"Well, depends on your definition on transformed." The mage said, walking around the avianized and feminized young man, his gaze making Stephen feel a little awkward. "See, you are technically still you under all those feathers. Rather it is the costume that transforms, becoming what the wearer perceives it would look like if the costume was their real bodies, consciously or subconsciously. It even alters their voice to what they perceive it would sound like if they were their costumes. As for the sensations I'm sure you are feeling, the magick of the costume makes it seem like every part of your body feels as real as it looks but in truth it is only the magick tricking your mind into thinking the sensations are real."

"But what about my eyes and my mouth? If this was still a costume shouldn't the eyes remain perfectly still and I should still be able to see my own mouth under the beak?" Stephen asked, pointing at his open beak.

"Well... ok, so there is a some minor alterations where the suits eyes and mouth will merge with the wearers. But it is only minor and adds to how real the suit looks. Plus it allows for the wearer to eat and drink while in suit. Also constantly staring blank eyes on a realistic body tend to creep people out."

"Yeah... I guess you got a point there. But what about the zipper? It vanished after I put the suit on!"

"Oh that? That is just an illusion. The zipper is still there. Just need to calm yourself and think of the zipper there. Then it shouldn't be too hard to find and you'll be out of the suit in no time."

"Oh... alright, I'll give it a try." Stephen said calmly and tried to focus, reaching up to where the zipper should be and thinking about it being there. Sure enough, the zipper re-appeared and he was able to grasp it. He was about to open the costume back up but quickly decided to do so in the bathroom, what with being naked underneath. He quickly unzipped himself, removing the suit from his body and, after inspecting himself to make sure he was still his normal self, put his clothes back on. He left the bathroom with suit in hand, the costume looking like it did before he put it on, and gave it back to Jergo.

"Alright, old man, you have convinced me. Though... wouldn't it been easier to just to show me a simple spell or something? Like shooting a small fireball from your hands?"

Jergo smirked, "My boy, such a thing is dangerous and has been mostly improbable for most mages to cast such instantaneously for over a thousand years. We've all kinda fell out of practice due to having to hide for so long. There isn't a mage that I personally know of these days with such talent, and there isn't too many of us anymore. Besides, where would the fun be in that?" He chuckled and put the costume back into the box.

"Well, couldn't you have at least chosen a male costume for me instead?" Stephen asked, frowning and crossing his arms.

The mage looked at the young man and grinned. "Didn't you listen to what I said earlier? The costume becomes what the wearer perceives it to be. Beyond that all my costumes are genderless."

Stephen felt his cheeks grow hot as his face turned bright red, realizing exactly now what the mage had meant by that. He quickly checked his watch and lightly coughed into his hand. "Well...umm... unless there is anything else you need help with I think I shall be going now as it'll be dinner soon and I'd hate to miss that. Do take care now, Mr. Jergo sir." Stephen said and hastily walked towards the store exit.

Jergo smiled and followed Stephen to the exit. "Yes, well thank you so much for helping me and please do come by again sometime. Maybe bring a friend or two. You seem like an interesting individual and I can sense you have a kind heart. I could always use a hand once in a while and perhaps if you so desired you could try on another costume or two. Though after a while I would like it if you would buy one." He chuckled and waved goodbye to the young man as he walked away down the street.

Stephen stopped for a moment and felt a small smile creep along his face, despite still feeling a bit embarrassed. He turned back around and waved goodbye to Jergo. "I'll keep it in mind to stop by once in a while. See you around, Jergo, and thanks for the demonstration." He said happily before resuming his journey back home, wondering what tomorrow will bring in this changed world he lived in.