

## CHAPTER II

### RAIYU

The smoke lingered for a bit, but soon a figure could be seen at the very spot the spark exploded at. Upside down with a cheek against the floor. Gravity took effect as one can predict and the stranger was flat on the floor.

Fanning the smoke away, the count, butler, and girl got a good look.

It appeared to be a young woman in her late teens with surf-green skin, pointed ears with ruby studs in the lobes, and a knee-length ultramarine ponytail. She wore white harem pants, gold shoes with curled toes, and an electric violet top.

She sat up with a groan and rubbed her head.

"Are you okay?" asked Vegoia, still clutching the bottle.

The stranger opened her eyes and took notice of the young human. "Forgive me, my mistress," she said "I am not yet accustomed to the physics of this plane."

"Mistress?" Vegoia said, perplexed.

"Would you care for some water?" asked Cube.

"No, thank you, er..."

"My name is Cube," said the butler. "This is my employer Count Limbourg and his daughter Vegoia."

"It is an honor to meet you," she said with a bow. "My name is Raiyu. I am a Genie assigned by Lord Palz and Lord Dorzd to serve a child who was instructed to free me."

"Do you grant wishes?" Vegoia asked enthusiastically.

Raiyu smiled. "I am afraid that such of my kind are of a more potent class."

"But whoever heard of a Genie that doesn't grant wishes?" Cube inquired.

"I am not entirely surprised by your reaction," she admitted. "I am a mere category Zeta Genie, as such my magic is fairly limited. The Genies you think of are much more powerful than I, such as Gammas and above."

Limbourg stroked his chin. "I've heard a lot of lore about the Genies over the years. The emperor of Cham is said to have two Genies in his service, other encounters ranged from having crushes on their masters to turning some unlucky guy into a monkey."

"Verily," said Raiyu "such a fate would have certainly befallen whoever released me ahead of today, but Lord Palz would have executed such a curse. He also said that you would have a Slime Core in your possession."

An awkward silence overtook the room for a second before being broken by Cube. "Well that was lucky!"

The Genie pointed at her bottle. From out of the neck came a roll of parchment with two seals, lifted by her telekinetically. "Another matter," she said "Lord Palz in the event you'd followed your instructions has charged me to give you this message."

The scroll levitated to the count, who broke both seals. Revealing the document, it appeared to be blank, but text slowly appeared:

*Young Malachias,*

*If you are reading this, you are to be congratulated for your obedience. The next phase is to commence at twilight tomorrow. The core of the Green Slime you killed twelve years ago is to be thrown by your daughter into the pond directly north of Corus. It is imperative that this is carried out.*

*Palz*

"One mystery dies," Limbourg remarked "one mystery is born."



*Figure 1. Hipec River at low level, facing upstream.*

The next morning was clear and sunny. First thing after a change and breakfast, Limbourg tasked Vegoia with going to Solanus on an errand. She asked if Raiyu could come with her and was obliged. She was, after all, her mistress and she'd probably need someone to talk to on the road south.

Raiyu enjoyed the company of her new mistress, though the fact that she still enjoyed activities one normally outgrows less than ten years ago was puzzling for the Genie. Even though she had telekinetic powers that could come in handy around the house and such, she showed absolutely no experience

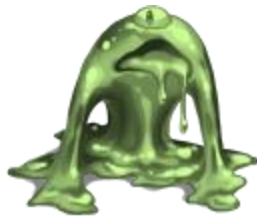
changing diapers last night. She did do a little better for the morning change, though.

"There's the river," said Vegoia, noting a glittering surface ahead. "Solanus is only a little further."

"I take it you have been to this town before, mistress?" asked the Genie.

"Usually with Dad," said Vegoia "but I've occasionally soloed market deliveries there since I was ten and — uh-oh!" A Green Slime had emerged from under a bush and was slithering toward the pair.

"Another one. This will be quick."



*Figure 2. Green Slime.*

The Slime was undone with a quick stab of Vegoia's dagger, leaving behind a single gold archma.

"For someone as young as you are," said Raiyu "your fighting skills are quite impressive."

"I learned from the best," the young girl said, half-bragging.

Raiyu smiled and shook her head. Slimes and Wretch Condors were no trouble for Vegoia, but she still drinks from a bottle.

"Say, Raiyu, how come you were put in a bottle?" Vegoia asked. "It couldn't just be because of me."

"Many Genies elect to subordinate themselves to mortals such as yourself as a means to improve their position in the hierarchy," she explained. "Accumulated credits of service can be used to upgrade your category. In general, ten moon-cycles is the equivalent to a single credit. At a minimum, it would take around forty credits to qualify for a promotion."

Vegoia stared at her for a second upon hearing this. "That sounds like a long time."

"Only to a mortal."

The two continued down the route, but before long they got to Solanus. A town of log buildings not too different from Corus, but as things appeared, not as many people. Their own destination, Pietro's workshop, was locked.

"Dad said this place would be open," said Vegoia "but I haven't seen a single person since we came to town."

The twosome wandered around the streets for a few minutes, before they caught sight of an old lady watering flowers from her window. They wasted no time approaching her.

"Excuse me," said Vegoia "do you know where everybody is? We've just reached town and the whole place is deserted!"

"They're all across the river at the cave," the old woman told her. "Yesterday, the mayor's grandson went in there and never came out. So far, the whole posse they assembled hasn't been able to find him."

Following the old woman's words, Vegoia and Raiyu crossed the river, where a whole ring of people had gathered at the foot of a bluff. A ruckus emitted from the center. While Vegoia had no way of seeing through the backs and heads of all the rubberneckers there, Raiyu easily floated a few feet off the ground.

A cave was ahead and at its mouth, several men were struggling with Green Slimes. Some tried to stab them with pitchforks, but they simply went through the oozy masses. Others tried to chop them with butcher's knives and hatchets but to similar futility.

Vegoia eventually got through the crowd and joined in. What had been a long struggle for the villagers ended in only a moment when she made short work of the Slimes.

"Thank you," said an exhausted farmer, putting his pitchfork down.

"I was told about the mayor's grandson," she said. "Let us go into the cave. We'll find him."

"Well be careful," said another would-be hero "we struggled with these Slimes, who knows what could be in there!"

The human and the Genie entered the cave.

If the mayor's son were still alive, based on the inefficient adults' efforts, it would be a miracle.