

Five

Agil woke on Kingo's plane. The memory of Babylon and that night he sparred with Druig still warm and aching in his mind. Shining, he sat up in his seat and rubbed at his eyes. The plane was humming with motion around him and he rubbed at the skin under his eyes in an effort to ward off the oncoming headache. "Nice nap?" Gilgamesh asked. Agil opened his eyes. Thena was in the chair next to him, seemingly absorbed in reading a Bollywood magazine that featured Kingo's face on the front cover. Gilgamesh was sat in the seat across the table from them.

"It was okay", Agil sighed as he sat up. Kingo, Karun and Sprite were in a set of seats further up the plane. Sersi and Ikaris talking softly in the seats behind them. The plane itself was plush and in colours of gold, purple and blue. It matched Kingo's armour.

"What were you dreaming of?" Gilgamesh asked. He was watching Agil with a gentle gaze that he rarely used for anyone besides Thena. For all his jokes and bravado, he could be rather perceptive when called for.

"Babylon", Agil answered honestly. He didn't look at the other man as he pulled his bag up from under the table and brought out a sketchbook and a set of charcoal pencils. The papers made soft sounds as he thumbed to a clean one and his pencil created a soothing line as he dragged it across the white.

"Are you sure you're okay about seeing Druig again?" Gilgamesh's voice was concerned and he lowered it so that the other's wouldn't hear. "I mean, you came to us after it happened. We saw how you were. Are you sure?"

"You should probably be the one asking Druig that question", Agil shot back, harsher as his chest ached. "I mean, I was the one to ruin it all. I hurt him. So don't ask me". His tone held no arguments and Gilgamesh sat back in his seat with a frown. Agil ignored the man and concentrated on the page under his hands. Druig's painfully familiar face taking shape on the paper, lit by flaming torches under a moonlight night.

570 B.C Babylon

They had stayed in region of Babylon for five years before Ikaris asked Sersi to marry him. During that time they had moved away from the city of blue tiles, leaving the Domo under its streets and travelling like humans as they migrated to the villages on the outskirts of the Babylonian empire. It was while travelling with a tribe of merchants that Agil had grown bored and seated himself near a white haired old man. The man had been drawing with charcoal on parchment the horses and carts of their party. Agil had watched humans create art before, paintings on cave walls and mosaics on floors. He had seen charcoal many times but for some reason, probably boredom, he took more of an interest in this man's drawing than usual.

The man was talented. His fingers brought out Phastos' likeness perfectly on the yellow paper, the dark skinned man talking to the merchants about their goods. Ikaris and Thena were at the front of the caravan with the scouting warriors. Gilgamesh was on the back of a kart with Kingo, the two involved with conversation. Sprite was with Makkari, the speedster having raced around the world a few times already to fetch whatever food Sprite had requested. It had become a sort of game for them. Druig was with Ajak. The two of them involved in their own conversation while Sersi entertained the merchant's children. All of them taking shape on the parchment as Agil watched.

"That is good" he commented in the native language.

The white haired man paused to look at him in surprise. They had been travelling together for over a month now and not once had Agil spoken to any of the humans. "Thank you esteemed one. It is a simple pleasure".

"You have talent".

The old man chuckled and shook his head. "A simple hobby. Would you like to try?"

"I have never drawn before" Agil protested, though it sounded weak on his own ears. The man chuckled and handed him a piece of charcoal and a smaller, shabbier piece of parchment.

"Practise. If you don't like it, brush it off and try again".

Agil looked up at the caravans. His gaze drifting over every member of his family before settling on where Druig was now talking with Sprite and Makkari. The speedster girl was laughing at something Sprite had signed. Druig smiling and replying as Sprite tried to elbow him. It was a sweet image. Agil pressed his charcoal to the paper and set about recreating the feeling that image gave him, the closeness and the warmth.

It was needless to say that his first few attempts were terrible. He practised as they moved on to a village in a cliff valley. Phastos made him a slate board lined with wood, simple but effective and gave him chalk as well as a block lined with cloth to erase his mistakes. It was very useful and he kept it in a bag he had slung round his shoulders when he wasn't using it. While Sersi and Ajak helped the women make bread, Ikaris and Thena scouted for Deviants, Kingo and Sprite played in the lands, Makkari hunted for treasures she found interesting and Phastos thought up new designs, Agil would sit and draw. Slowly, with frustrated efforts but dedication, the blobs took form and the figures began to take shape.

It was a sunny day perched up on a cliff edge high over the village, feet dangling over the drop and hands sketching out the land below, that the soft sound of feet joined him. Agil looked up to see Makkari above him. She smiled and seated herself at his side, kicking her legs where they hung over the air. "You drawing again?" Her hands were smooth and curious as she signed.

Agil nodded and tucked the tablet away in his bag to keep his hands free. "Were you looking for me?" He asked, signing as he spoke.

Makkari nodded and bounced slightly, grinning widely in visible excitement. "Ikaris and Sersi are getting married! There's going to be a ceremony in a week".

Agil's eyebrows rose in surprise. "Did he finally confess? Fuck. I lost the bet. I thought he wouldn't confess for another decade or so".

"Well he did, so pay up" Makkari jerked out her hand and wriggled her fingers. Agil sighed as she beamed at him. Makkari was like the sun, blinding and warm and no one could refuse her. Not even Ikaris. She just wormed her way under your armour until she had a place of fondness in your heart. Even though he had lost a bet they'd had going for over a century, Agil still wasn't annoyed at her.

"Fine, fine. What was my end of the deal again?"

"You promised you'd take me flying" Makkari signed with emphasis. "I have seen the world but I have never seen the skies" She pouted at him and Agil groaned. She had been pestering him for this for the last few thousand years, ever since he had first taken his wings to the skies of this earth. She had asked Ikaris too but that guy was a grump.

Agil hunched and rolled his eyes but was unable to keep the grin from his lips. "Come on then. I'll have you know that I am a much better flyer than Ikaris", he signed as he stood and slung his bag over his shoulder. He held out his hand to her with a bow. "If you may dear sister". Makkari hopped to her feet with a cheek splitting grin. She pressed a hand to his and he stepped closer, bringing her arms up to loop round his neck. "Hold on. The others will kill me if I drop you". She tightened her hold and he wrapped his hands round her back before tipping them over the side of the cliff.

The wing swept past them as they fell and Makkari opened her mouth in a soundless thrilled scream as golden peregrine falcon wings burst from his back in a shower of glimmering gold and swept them up. They beat fiercely and they were climbing up out of their fall high into the clouds. Up high enough until the ground was obscured by fluffy clouds and the sun beat down upon them from the skies above. For a second, Agil held steady, watching as his sister's big brown eyes widened in awe and glee at the sight. Then he was falling down, wings folding in and plummeting dive. The ground reappeared and the clouds left them behind.

Makkari let out a high pitched noise of laughter as Agil spun them through the air. Her long braids whipping past as she reached out one hand, the other gripping his armour tightly, to try and grab the clouds. Agil let out a whooping thrill and his wings extended to swoop them from a dive into a arching glide above the village below. They could see the small figures of the villagers stopping to point up at them above in awe. It was the first time he had flown close enough for them to see him and they all stopped what they were doing. Sersi and Ikaris were visible in their armour by the rocks to the north. The other elementals dotted behind the village. Agil spotted Druig by the river. Makkari waved before they were soaring up on a wind current into the clouds above.

Agil flew with her for about an hour, the low temperatures of the sky not affecting them as they glided, plummeted, flipped and spun through the air. As the sun began to set, he glided gently down towards the village. He let go of Makkari's waist to take her hands and lower her down to the ground first as his wings flapped. For a second, as her feet hit the earth, she stumbled but managed to right herself. When his feet touched the ground, the wings dissipated and she was stumbling towards him. Her legs shaky with adrenaline. "That was amazing" her hands were giggly and her smile wide. "Thank you".

"Well you won the bet", Agil smiled back. The smile faded as he glanced up at the crowds of staring villagers.

"You put on quite a show", Kingo grinned as he greeted them. "Did you have fun?" Makkari turned to him, hands moving quickly as she began to describe the experience to him. Agil's gaze remained sweeping over the villagers and settled on the old man who had first given him the charcoal.

The man smiled at him and he found himself taking several steps closer. "Angel!", the man stated as he held out a piece of parchment. There, in chalk and charcoal, was him. His wings were extended from his body and the clouds encircled his form. Agil stared down at it, not sure what to feel.

unedited

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