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In the days that followed, they traveled slowly across the desert towards Dalmasca, Hrvoje setting a deliberately slower pace to allow the young girl to start to recover. It would strain his supplies, but he knew the desert well, and how to plumb its hidden supplies of much-needed water.

They traveled in small bursts, between the heat of noonday sun and icy cold of deep night, and all the while they learned more of each other's language and selves. Hrvoje told Rael of his homeland, a faraway place called Bozja, and of his race; the Hrothgar. He asked her if she wished a new name on that first dawn, accepting when she couldn't think of one, but making sure she knew she could decide when she wished.

When she asked, he told her about the Viera who'd taught him their tongue. Ukina Hyskaris had been a highly skilled conjurer, who later in life had taken the name Cherry Petal. The two had traveled together for some time, and he had learnt the basics of her language from her.

Every time she fell asleep Rael feared that this was all a dream, and that she'd wake up in the jungle again, surrounded by those who couldn't understand her. Yet every time she woke, her father was still there. He explained in still halting Ravan that they would go to Rabanastre.

There was an alchemist he knew there, who might be able to help his charge. They would learn each other's tongues properly, then return to the road.

A few days later, the walls of Rabanastre loomed out of the desert haze before them, and Hrvoje led her up to the massive gates. It was utterly unlike anything Rael had seen before, who never seen construction beyond the simple dwellings of her old village. A good temporary home, her father said. Plenty of water, good food. And the chance of aid for what ailed her.

Taking her to a small shop, Hrvoje greeted the man behind the counter warmly whilst Rael tried to make sense of him. His skin was tanned, much like her, but he didn't stand nearly as tall as Ravan males did. Nor did he have familiar ears, his short black hair cut around two odd shapes of flesh on either side of his head. He wore a simple white jacket, stained here and there by alchemical

concoctions, and rounded spectacles that almost hid the sharp intelligence in his green eyes.

“This Raminas,” Hrvoje introduced the man, his tone that of one speaking of an old friend. “He Hyur,
not Viera like you.”

Now she had a word for him, yet the features were oddly familiar. She remembered descriptions from
her elders, of those who tried to enter their sacred forests and subjugate their kind. His people
were
responsible for how their men had to roam the jungle to protect it. How could he help?

“Who’s the kid, Hrvoje?” He asked. Rael couldn’t understand him, but she knew one of the words
that
came next. “And why the fuck did you bring a young Viera here?”

Revision #1

Created 13 November 2022 08:22:26 by Ashlyn Ishina

Updated 13 November 2022 08:23:41 by Ashlyn Ishina