

Alizair padded around the marketplace for what felt like the fifteenth time. His feathers flashed brightly in the fading light of the day, but he wasn't even pulling stares anymore - truly a testament to how much he'd been circling this place already. A few of the humans looked at him with a mixture of distrust and awe on their faces, but he was a relatively tame looking Vayron compared to some of his companions so they didn't pay him much mind. The children playing games in the dirt often ogled his feathers as he walked past, and a few even reached out to touch them in what he imagined they thought was a sly and super nonchalant move. He made sure to step a little closer when they did so they got a chance to run their fingertips over a feather or two. The giggles and hushed whispers were award enough.

Most of the adults treated him with apprehension, though. He wasn't a Puller or a Runner, not even making it to most of their chests in terms of size, but they looked at him like he was a threat to their very souls. He supposed a few might know what the feathers meant on a creature like himself, but most were just suspicious of his constant patrolling of their stalls and alleyways. It was pretty weird afterall.

He came to a stop at the end of his route once more, and reviewed the snippets of information he'd memorized in his head. Indra had told him about whispers on the wind, something he still wasn't entirely keen on believing, about a Vayron that might need their help in the area. She hadn't said what kind, or if they even wanted help at all - a lot of times with journeys like this one the Vayron in question balked at Alizair's presence and not too politely shoo'd him away. It was his calling in life to seek them out though, and for every Vayron that turned him away with a nervous flick of their tail and dismissal of his words there was always one that exuded relief when he told them why he was there. They didn't always show it at first, but Indra was rarely wrong about these things and more and more Vayrons and Tyrians were walking the path to The Sanctuary every year. It was enough to convince Alizair to keep venturing out to find them, at least.

A small crash in the marketplace brought Alizair's attention up, wandering had it been, and for a moment he thought he'd finally caught a break. A Vayron was being chastised for walking a bit too close to a pottery stall - they'd bumped into it and a few scattered remains of what were likely once mediocre at best pots were now strewn about the ground. While the human was yelling and gesticulating wildly at the Vayron in question, Alizair noticed another, stealthier, Vayron scoop something up from behind the stall and disappear into the shadows of a distant alley. Clever indeed.

Neither of the Vayrons fit the description that he'd been given though, vague as it was, so he turned his attention elsewhere. A few of the nearby humans had also turned their gaze from the commotion in the marketplace and were now eyeing him with renewed suspicion. He gave them a sidelong glance, but knew it was likely to be ineffective on humans who clearly did not understand the intricacies of Vayron behavior or culture. They seemed more confused by his expression than anything, but it got them to turn back to their own tasks and that was well enough for him.

“My my, don’t you stand out in the crowd,” A voice said over his right shoulder, a ways into the alley behind him. Alizair didn’t turn immediately, he didn’t sense any overt threat or danger mostly just mild curiosity, but he huffed out a laugh for pretense.

“The benefits of being blindingly yellow,” he replied in a chipper voice, intentionally ignoring the obvious feathers as they shifted over his muscles when he turned. He looked up into the face of a runner, who at first he hadn’t spotted entirely. Her coat was a dull orange like the sandstone and clay buildings around them, marred only by intermittent flecks of black and a bit of white on her legs. She certainly blended in a lot better than he, that was for sure.

“I imagine the hideous feathers and creepy tails don’t help,” came a rather flat response, and Alizair didn’t even cringe a whole time. Nope. He did let one of his ‘creepy tails’ wrap loosely around his back leg though, just because he could.

“Yes well we can’t all be blessed with good genetics unfortunately!” Alizair groused, feigning a deep seated discontent at his own appearance. It was better to play along when things got like this than take the bait, he had quickly learned. Hard to verbally beat up on someone half your size and complacent in broad daylight afterall.

“It’s a shame they let you two walk around free honestly, I’m of the mind you’re more dangerous than you look,” Came the response, which Alizair wasn’t entirely expecting. Yes to the dangerous front - but surely they were not referring to both of his tails and himself?

“The two of us?” Alizair chimed, going for innocent and non threatening. Maybe he could get some useful information out of this Vayron before they decided he wasn’t worth their time. The Sandstone looking female peered down at him curiously, as if she realized something. Damn, he had been too overt about it. He resisted the urge to sigh when a bit of a cruel smirk played itself onto her face.

“Lost your friend have you? I’m not sure how - she’s impossible to miss,” The female droned, but she was rambling as she side stepped Alizair and moved out into the harsh sunlight of the marketplace. In the direct lighting Alizair mused that she was definitely more of a cantaloupe color, than sandstone.

“We got separated, I’m just trying to find her so we can leave,” He tried for concerned and innocent, a bit hurried. If this Vayron didn’t want either of them around, well, maybe convincing her they would leave sooner if she helped him would be a good thing. A quick drag of her feline like tail across his face as she lead the way into the slowly closing stalls gave away that she planned to toy with him - at least or a bit.

“She’s been here quite a bit longer than you, something must have kept you up for a long time,” came the smooth reply. Alizair trotted to catch up with her, each of his steps equating to about half of one of hers. Damn his short legs!

“Please, it would be really great if you could help me find her,” he tried a bit of pleading, not afraid to play up the very pup-like nature of his stature and appearance. It worked sometimes, and he didn’t mind. He made absolutely certain his eyes went wide and his ears drooped for maximum effect. The female just scoffed at him. Damn again!

“You give me something, and I might consider showing you where you’re likely to find her.” Ah, there was the hitch. Alizair didn’t like these types of deals, because he had nothing of value to give. He was a scout, a wanderer, and therefore didn’t carry anything on him except necessities if required really. Anything he had of value - which wasn’t even much to begin with - was back at The Sanctuary and couldn’t be easily retrieved. Spending the time to go back to get something that *might* interest this Vayron would likely end in failure anyways. Alizair sighed heavily, looking askance at the female as she led the way through the dwindling crowd. The sun was nearly set now, and lanterns were being lit around them. It was a bit too early for the night market crowd, so there was a brief period of relative quiet and privacy. Alizair decided to get this whole thing over with.

“I don’t have much to give, what do you want that I can get for you?” He asked flatly, not bothering to watch her for a response. He could hear the smile in her voice when she spoke again, and it *almost* made him shudder from the implications.

“You have plenty of things to give little Chaser! They’re all over you,” she proclaimed almost as if challenging him. Alizair gave her an annoyed look, which was apparently not what she was expecting. She narrowed her eyes at him, but before she could speak he interrupted.

“You want one of my feathers?” he asked, no hint of apprehension or malice in his voice. He was just being certain he was understanding her correctly. He stopped walking, awaiting her response, and noticed they’d come to rest quite a ways from the marketplace. There was a cool looking fountain here that a few of the buildings opened up towards, and white lattice and trellis created a rather private looking garden. The fountain depicted a strong looking human woman, who was pouring water into the base. Neat.

“You’d give me one?” If anything the female sounded impressed now, she had her head cocked as she regarded him a bit closer now. She obviously hadn’t been expecting him to give up so easily, and instead of upping her gambit seemed to find something respectable about that. Alizair smiled a sweet smile, and left all the poison out of it.

“Of course! It’s important I find my friend,” As he spoke one of his tails flicked up towards his face, and when he was finished speaking he deftly plucked one of the longer trailing feathers from it. It was about a foot long, and just as yellow as the rest of him - it would be considered beautiful if you didn’t know it came from the tail of a “cursed” Vayron. There was a shocked sound from deeper in the garden, and Alizair turned slightly at the sound. The female beside him chuckled.

“Well you’ve found her, I believe,” she said, and snatched the feather from his mouth. Before he could so much as protest, she was gone back down the alley from whence they’d come. Alizair was about to call out how that could possibly be, he didn’t see anyone but himself in the garden, when a brilliant blue glow colored his vision near the fountain. He snapped his jaws shut and turned - quite taken back by what he saw.

Another Vayron stood there, staring directly at him and the empty space where his reluctant companion had just been. In this light it was difficult to make out many colors and markings, the blue coming from the cracks in her fur and body overpowered all else. There weren’t any lanterns lit here, and the flow off the water illuminated the entire garden and the white trellis that encompassed them. It was a beautiful sight to behold for sure, but the exact opposite of subtle. How had he missed this?

“You’ve been looking for me?” Came a soft voice, and Alizair realized he’d been staring, rather rudely in fact. He cleared his throat and trotted up to the Runner, making sure not to appear threatening in any way.

“I have, you’re quite difficult to find - at least during the day it seems,” Alizair replied, gesturing to the soft glow around them produced by the marking across her figure. She seemed to flinch at his words, but didn’t drop his gaze. Sensitive out of caution? He thought so.

“Why?” A fair question, all things considered. It wasn’t as if she had called out to them herself. Seeing her condition now, he suspected she was quite incapable of that in fact. Corrupted, he heard humans call it. He didn’t know how something so pretty could be considered corrupted, honestly.

“That’s sort of a long story,” The little yellow Chaser started, shifting a bit awkwardly from paw to paw. This was always the hardest part! No one ever believed him, but Indra told him it was important to be truthful. He took a deep breath, the female in front of him was clearly waiting for him to continue. He tried to pour honesty into his words as he spoke, “My friend has a unique talent for finding those who may need our help, or protection. We live in a really cool place, a Sanctuary really, for Vayrons like us,” - he flicks his double tails covered in feathers to indicate his own condition before continuing - “and it’s my job to find them. She heard you, I don’t really know how that works still, but she told me to come find you. So I came straight away and looked for you all day!”

His long winded story and theatrics seem to confuse the Vayron a bit, and she takes a single step away from him. Her ears are back, and her small tail is alert. Oh no, she looks like she wants to run. Alizair tries to make himself look even smaller.

“Your friend...?” She asks, and he’s not surprised she’d start there. It was a lot to take in. His mouth forms an ‘O’ shape when he realizes he left out a crucial detail.

“Yes! Her name is Indra. She is a very old Tyrian, she’s different, like us,” he exclaims, excited again. His feathers ruffle a bit in response. The female visibly seems to relax when he mentions Indra and describes her, so Alizair files that detail away. He finds himself nodding a bunch for no good reason, and stops himself suddenly.

“I understand it’s really weird, when she found me I was very suspicious of her too. I was in Roenden even!” Alizair can’t help but smile at the memory, a bit of laughter breaking up the words, “She told me she needed my help, and that I would be safer with her. You see, a lot of humans and Vayrons in Roenden thought my feathers were very valuable, I wasn’t always very safe.”

Once again the Runner seems to relax at his words, if only slightly. This is the part Alizair is best at, telling his stories and being honest. He nods sagely, there was likely a shared history here in some way.

“If they’re valuable, why did you give one away? Something so precious shouldn’t be given away on a chance, she could have been lying,” Alizair realized she must have heard some of the conversation, and he chuckles. He flicks the tail the feather came from back and forth, drawing attention to it briefly. A mirthful look plasters itself on his face, then.

“Oh, I hardly rely on chances like that,” as he speaks the other feathers on his tail begin to emit a dull hum, and glow. A warm white light encases them, and a soft whistling sounds in the distance before the feather in question comes zipping down the alleyway. It reattaches itself into the base of his tail, and he offers the female in front of him a sly wink, “I prefer to think of our meeting as fate, anyways!”

“Ah, I see now,” she says, but there’s a small smile on her lips as she regards his tail and feathers curiously. Alizair can’t help but be a little proud, it took him a long time to teach himself how to do that.

“Handy, if the feather doesn’t wander too far,” he explains, but then he gestures down the alley and continues, “but pretty easy to follow if it’s close enough. I’d rather we be going now, so I don’t have to give out anymore feathers today!”

“Of course,” turning to go, the female leads the way out of the garden through another path. The glow of blue that had surrounded them follows her, and leaves the garden in darkness once more. Alizair muses that nighttime must be rather difficult for her, before quickly catching up and following at her side.

“I’m Alizair, by the way,” he offers, figuring they were at least to the point where names could be exchanged. She nods and smiles, but doesn’t offer her own. Oh, awkward. But this has totally happened before and he should have seen it coming.

“Oh uhm, Indra doesn’t give me any names, or anything like that when she sends me out,” he tries really hard to sound nonchalant, but can tell he fails miserably. He’d be blushing if he could. Besides him the female startles a bit, and looks down at him curiously. They’re still walking through alleys, but they’re all dark and secluded. She still whispers when she speaks, though.

“She didn’t tell you my name? How were you supposed to find me?” She asks incredulously. Alizair doesn’t blame her, sometimes he really struggles with it too.

“Indra always tells me where to look and that ‘*You’ll know them when you see them*,’” he does his best Indra impression, but he thinks he fails to mimic the sagely intonation of her voice or the ethereal wisdom in her words, because the Runner just looks even more confused.

“She didn’t even tell you what I look like?” she is definitely concerned now. Whether she’s concerned on Alizair’s behalf or her own, he can’t tell.

“Well, no,” Alizair says, but quickly continues at the look of utter dismay on his companion’s face, “But I don’t know if she knows either! I don’t know how the visions work. I just trust that they do. So far I’ve always found someone!”

“That’s crazy!” is the response, but he can’t find it in himself to be upset by the declaration. It does sound kind of crazy. He feels obligated to defend Indra though, so he gives a half-hearted ‘noooooo’ and shakes his head weakly. There’s a moment of silence and then both Vayrons are laughing quietly in the dark.

“Well, Alizair, let’s get off the street. Perhaps you can tell me more about these crazy visions and this Sanctuary of yours,” alizair nods happily, and then realizes they’ve stopped at a dark doorway. The female turns into it, and looks back at him with a small smile, “My name is Rhiannon, by the way.”

Alizair smiles brightly and follows her in, the room illuminated by her markings as they enter and close the door behind them. There are no windows, but he’s not surprised. It’s the perfect place to wait out the night and avoid curious eyes. Alizair settles himself in the room, and waits for Rhiannon to do the same.

He has **so** much to tell her.