

“We’re almost there!”

“That is at least the second time you’ve said that, now.”

“Yeah but I really mean it this time.”

Rhiannon sighed heavily, but allowed Alizair to continue leading the way down the rough craggy path they’d been on for the last solid chunk of time. Alizair didn’t comment on her general disposition regarding his navigational skills, but he didn’t really have to. He knew where he was going, he’d taken this path a hundred times already by now. But sometimes...well the rocks all start to look the same after awhile, and he should probably stop proclaiming they’re nearing their destination before he’s absolutely certain. Which he is, now.

“I promise you it is just over this crest,” he claims, gesturing a bit with his head to the mild incline they’re currently climbing. It can’t be seen over, the sharp rocks and general terrain make sure of that, but it *does* give off the impression that something is just on the other side. It just has that look.

“You said it was a city,” Rhiannon drawls, though her tone should imply it, she doesn’t narrow her eyes at him. He’s leading and wouldn’t see it anyways. Her message is clear enough: she’d have noticed a city by now.

“A *hidden* city,” he stresses. Alizair is certain he explained that part. Maybe he needs to do a better job explaining things in the beginning to prevent this sort of thing from happening. He hears Rhiannon sigh from behind him but once again doesn’t comment on it. He gets it, he does. Indra flew him here the first time, but he had been super impatient then, too.

“I’m still skeptical on that, cities do not remain hidden for long,” Rhiannon pushes, it’s something she’s yet to come to terms with. She’d been relatively easy to convince in regards to the magical Tyrian maybe-goddess thing, but the hidden city was really tripping her up.

“It’s very hard to find if you aren’t invited, definitely invitation only,” Alizair says with a bit of mischief, he turns and gives Rhiannon a wink, “Technically I am your invitation for now. First timers can’t find this place on their own even if Indra wants them to, it’s weird.”

“I see,” is all the the marked female says, but she keeps her eyes resolutely on the crest. They’re getting closer to it now, and despite all doubts she feels an excitement humming to life in her chest. Alizair did a good job making this place sound like a paradise, and if nothing else she wants to see it before she goes back to Cadena. She highly suspects it will be nothing but a small oasis and a hut or two, though.

“Just trust me,” is all the small chaser says before he is up and over the crest of the incline, and out of view. Rhiannon blinks for a second, not quite sure that’s entirely possible. Even if there was a sheer drop on the other side, she’d have seen him fall. But he just appears to be...gone.

“I said trust me!” Is shouted back at her, but the voice sounds very far away and ethereal, like she should be in a dream instead of standing in the scorching heat amidst towering sharp rocks and deadly caverns. Rhiannon looks at where the Chaser should be standing again, frozen in place. She feels a peculiar tug in her core, and for a second she panics and fears Invocation is trying to pull her into itself. It’s enough to propel her forward, that fear, and she begins walking in the direction her little yellow companion disappeared into.

It’s hard to explain, but for a brief second Rhiannon is certain she doesn’t exist.

Then in the next second she’s standing on a marble step, staring up at an impossibly tall tower against an even bluer sky than she’s ever seen in her life. The white of the stone creates such a stark contrast against the vibrance of the sky that for a moment she’s shocked into place once more.

There’s giggling in the distance, and she pulls her gaze away from the tower to follow it. Immediately she is on edge.

There is a massive Tyrian resting above Alizair.

They’re both on the ground, but the difference in their size is almost comical for how close they seem to be. Alizair barely compares to one of the Tyrians clawed hands, which spreads out on the ground to cover it with a leathery smooth wing. They’re both looking directly at her and have a shared look of understand on their faces. It sets her nerves on edge.

“I told you, hidden city!” Alizair says proudly, gesturing around them with both his front paws and both tails. He spins a bit in place, even though the Tyrian blocks most of his view as she’s standing above him. Rhiannon doesn’t say anything or move, and neither does the Tyrian. She’s bigger than any of their winged cousins Rhiannon has encountered before, and it’s a bit jarring.

“Indra, you’re being weird,” Alizair says with a pout in his tone. He shoves against the closest appendage - a clawed wing - and moves out from under her. He strides proudly up to Rhiannon, who looks down at him with a bit of relief. He’s familiar, definitely not huge, and not acting any weirder than normal. There are a few more Vayrons and even some humans watching the exchange from the base of the tower, and Rhiannon notices buildings form a semi circle around it as well. A city indeed.

“Forgive me, Alizair is much better at greetings than I,” the Tyrian, Indra, says. Her voice seems to fill all the quiet spaces in Rhiannon’s head, and has a bit of an echo to it. She tries to hide the

flinch, but the knowing look from the massive Tyrian tells enough. The next time she speaks the weird echo is gone, and her tone is softer.

“Welcome to our city, our Sanctuary if you will,” Indra says with a sweep of one of her massive wings. Her clawed talons shine in the bright sunlight as she gestures to the buildings and people beyond. Rhiannon follows her gesture, amazed to see how many there are. At least a mile or two of white clay or marble buildings, some of them tall and sky reaching, but none of them as tall as the tower before them which seems to stand at the middle of the giant semi circle. There is a river bifurcating the city in two and like everything here it seems to gleam and glow in the sunlight. Strangeness aside, it is truly beautiful.

“I told you you’d like it,” Alizair says from her side, a knowing smirk on his face. She narrows her eyes down at him, having been caught in a bit of a daze. He just smiles and steps forward though, stopping briefly as an indication that she should follow. Without any better options before her, she does.

Behind them Indra follows silently, apparently content in leaving Alizair to his whims. A few of the humans trail beside or behind them, and a few Vayrons seem interested in following as well. She is used to eyes on her, but this feels different. They are curious but not hostile. Open in their gazes and attention. Many of them are just as unique looking as she, and for once she doesn’t seem to be standing out of the crowd solely because of how she looks. Instead it’s simply because she’s *new*.

“I’ll give you the whole tour, there’s so many cool places to see!” Alizair is saying to her, and she starts feeling a bit daunted at the prospect of a “Grand Tour” with so many watchful eyes. She may not be lighting up the darkness, but it certainly feels like it right now.

“Alizair, perhaps we could simply allow our new friend to rest from her travels, first?” Indra’s voice is a blessing as the Tyrian moves awkwardly slowly to keep the slow pace with them. Alizair seems a bit bashful all of a sudden, and he clears his throat quickly.

“Of course, I got a little excited, my bad,” he says fervently, bowing his head a little to Rhiannon, “I’ll show you where you can rest up, and you can spend as much time as you want there!”

His sudden shift in mood makes Rhiannon feel a bit guilty, though she’s not sure why. She offers him a small smile and nudges him a bit.

“Thank you, but you’ll show me around later, right?” she says, extending an olive branch to brighten the already blindingly colored Chasers mood. It works as intended, and he perks right up.

“Of course! I know all the best spots!” his jubilation is contagious, and Rhiannon laughs as he leads her down a side street, away from the imposing white tower that seems to scratch the very

heavens. Indra doesn't follow them, but that might be because the street is narrow and she's...very much not that narrow.

Suddenly they're much more alone, and those they pass on the street seem unconcerned with both of their presence. It's a blessing, and Rhiannon can feel herself relax in the shade of the buildings around them. She decides to prod her companion for a bit of information before she's left to her own devices.

"Why is she so big?" is for some reason the first thing out of her mouth, and she can barely suppress the embarrassed groan when she realizes what she said. Luckily, Alizair just laughs.

"No one knows, and she doesn't say. I think she's just really old, and has a lot of magic in her! I mean I have a good deal of magic and I'm pretty small, but I think it affects her...differently," Alizair muses, seemingly absorbed in his own theories. So it's a bit mysterious, then? Rhiannon can appreciate a bit of privacy. The way the small Chaser speaks of her magic is a bit alarming, though.

"What kind of magic does she have, exactly?" Rhiannon presses, trying to sound nonchalant and simply curious. If she's worried about an overly powered Tyrian ruling an entire city, her tone doesn't let it show.

"Well for starters she hides this city with her own power," Alizair says with a bit of awe in his voice, well deserved, "But she's also a capable healer. Many of the humans and Vayrons here stay here because she keeps them healthy and is able to help them when they need it, no matter what."

Rhiannon nods, that's not entirely unexpected.

"I've heard she can even bring people who have died back to life," Alizair says in a hushed whisper, looking around as he does. It's said with such a sense of scandal and secrecy that Rhiannon is immediately taken back, and falters a bit in her steps. They've come to a great staircase that seems to lead down to the river and more buildings, and she has to stop herself before they continue.

"From the dead?" she asks incredulously, unsure.

"So I've heard, but I've never seen it and Indra doesn't hide anything from me," the small Chaser says with such confidence that Rhiannon is keen to believe him. She doubts that there are no secrets among the two, but equally doubts their malicious nature if they exist. She nods again.

"Very interesting," is all she comments, following Alizair to a bright blue door set amongst white stones. It seems they've come to the end of their walk.

“You can stay here for now,” he explains, pushing open the door and moving inside, “There aren’t many that live around here yet - we’re getting new pilgrims everyday - so it’ll be pretty quiet and peaceful.”

Rhiannon takes note of the word *pilgrims* instead of *travelers* but otherwise doesn’t comment. She’s looking around the spacious room covered in wall hangings and cushions when Alizair pushes open a backdoor and a stream of light floods in.

“I thought you might like this one, considering where I found you,” he says a bit shyly, enough that Rhiannon is immediately curious.

She heads out the newly opened door and is greeted by the site of a small garden. It’s not very well tended, but it does remind her a bit of the trellis garden and fountain from where they first met. She offers him a smile when she notices he’s resolutely not looking at her.

“It will do nicely,” she says, not wanting to overly flatter him too much. He turns and beams at her though, and she fights down a smile to match his own. He’s contagious, this one.

“I’m glad you like it! Like I said before, you can stay here as long as you want, the place is yours,” something about the way he says it feels leading, like he’s trying to convince her to stay by giving her an open option to leave.

“How will I find you, once I’ve rested, for my grand tour?” She asks, eager to simply be alone for a while despite not minding Alizair’s company much.

“Come to the Tower, Indra and I will be there waiting!” the little yellow chaser says as he bounds out the front door, he turns back before he closes it and adds a cheeky, “You can’t miss it!” before closing the blue door behind him and disappearing.

Laughing softly to herself, Rhiannon settles amongst the cushions in the single room. Exhaustion does creep up to her rather quickly, and she’s silently grateful Indra had suggested the period of rest. While she does not entirely look forward to being paraded around the city, she can’t help but admit her curiosity is brimming.

She closes her eyes and resolves to deal with everything after some rest.