I Want to be an Astronaut

It was never the cold that I felt like I had to temper myself for, nor the uncomfortable feeling of sticks, rocks, and sand that invaded their way between my toes. It was never the hollow lands and the beasts that stalked them for prey. It was this feeling that rooted itself into my bones and veins. The feeling that filled the cold augmented metals pressed and sewn into my back. It was loneliness and the pressure of thoughts.

I hadn't yet let my mind wander to the world around me, nor the memories of the faces of innocents and sinners that amalgamated my everyday thoughts like molds pressed into magma, the same magma the had torn my skin from bones leaving a forever unescapable itch between my joints.

I remember those moments the greatest and even with my memories slowly fading away I could not believe that I would not remember them when I am nothing more than a husk of emptiness. Star had been so close yet as Apoldyon fell to sink back into its womb, I felt nothing... my eyes glazed over as the lurking powers of the Winter Wolf joined the angel of the depths into its fiery domain. All I saw were stars above me and I heard the sweetest of voices beside me.

Even as I replayed these memories the cold winds of the surrounding lands gently tucked and swayed the sheer fabrics that I wore as my naked skin turned to ice underneath the slip of a sleep dress; I heard the voice once more as I gazed upon the stars above me. "Blossom, how you have grown to fill this world, it is so unlike you."

I justled everything nearly causing my stiffened joints to crack, and my sight wavered around me searching and stopping as I caught the soft glimmer that made my memories beautiful; my mama stood mere feet away with the gentlest of smiles that made all my worries drain away into nothingness.

"You know" the incorporeal woman whispered upon the winds, "I still remember the little girl that would hide herself within the flaps of the tents to escape this world. She was so fragile and frail that even the softest of words would cause her to shiver in fright. Said girl never left my side, she was the most beautiful of clothing that clung to me for years and now I find her alone among a snow-covered plateau awaiting the world to lift her up, am I wrong?"

I stuttered and tried to shift myself to stand but with no food or water and hours into my vigil there was truly little for me to offer, but to hang my head for a moment as my sight wavered. The woman's form kneeled and sat beside me, her hands reaching to pull and cradle my head within her lap, and her fingers brushed through my hair soothingly.

"You do not have to speak my blossom; I too remember this day just as any other day. Today is not my day of duty, today is your day, and I know it seems so small in the grand scheme of things, but I must speak to you bluntly. Today will be a choice that will change your future like no other,

today you choose to become a true Versi.”

I cleared my throat of tears that came from a well I did not know I had within. A sorrowful howl breached my heart at those words as if a truth that I was running from had finally found me, one of those beasts that had caught its prey within these fields. I had started to speak before I had even the thought to notice, “I’m not real, am I?”

“No more real than I am my blossom, or all those that have reached out to you in your dreams, you hear them don’t you deep down you share their emotions and thoughts, you are one of them?” the woman squeezed my arms reassuringly before brushing a tear away from my eye. “Look beyond us, can you see them, focus…”

As I heard mama’s words turn into a soft lullaby I looked past the darkness of the fields, the shine of the stars reflecting off the nearby lake still yet unfrozen. It felt like the world had turned twice before the feelings stirring within me manifested and I heard them. The cacophony of quiet whispers that each brought their own feelings and intent, some filled with anger and vitriol, others with sorrow and tears, and others darker yet with an end to life itself.

Just beyond us barely perceivable were the incorporeal outlines of tents and fires, of cloths hanging from string lines and barrels brimming with goods. People moved and gathered themselves together to stand just outside of the boundary, all watching me. “I’m a… memory,” even as I spoke that truth I watched as the beings all nodded together. Smiles of memories from pasts bringing with it a comfort that I could never put into words to anyone.

“What we are dear blossom is far beyond this star, our kind come far deep within the fabrics of the stars themselves, driven by a duty to bring light to this void of dark above us. A lesson that we do not get to learn ourselves, but instead learn from others,” mama’s hand gently cradled my abdomen, and I could almost feel the warmth she brought me. “These three are the first of the lights you have brought into our skies, there was one more before them wasn’t there, a song that turned you around, wasn’t there?”

I blinked back confusion before turning to stare into the glowing irises of the Au’Ra woman, “Melody?”

Mama smiled down at me; the woman’s eyes felt slightly empty as she turned from warming me to holding my hand as she held me. “I remember my first daughter that I had lost, a lesson to us to take our duty seriously, to teach us the truth about the world itself and the stars that shine within it, I went through it, your grandmother went through it, your great grandmother went through it. At some point in each Versi’s life they had went through it. Melody chose you that day to take this mantle.”

She watched me as my eyes darted back and forth before settling to ponder at the stars above us. One twinkled madly as if to giggle and laugh among its friends, before it shot off into the void. Realizations flooded me with each passing minute as my loneliness was traded out for contentment, the figures in the beyond stepping closer with each passing.

Almost like a diamond crawling its way from the recess of my mind and old gentleman's voice like a poet spoke a phrase I had long forgotten, "what does it mean to be alive? When purpose wonders and I keep asking for more, and as I ponder over those words, making life is what it means to be alive… making life is what it means to be alive."

Mama's voice clipped through my thoughts, "You have a choice to make blossom and it will not be one that is easy. You once lied to those you love, pretending to bind yourself to the fey when you entered the lifestream at the cost of your life. Did you never wonder why you never second guessed yourself? All Versi come to that moment in their lives as the test of merit and you survived the first step. Now it's time for the second step… realize the truth in the beyond, join us and understand your purpose."

Mama placed my head back upon the ground and I tried to cling to her to stop her from standing outside my reach but could not. I watched as she stepped to join the others with welcoming hands. "Blossom, come join us for the evenings to come and realize the truth or return back once more as a mortal as you once were, but… the sky will be three less stars than the future has foretold…"

"What does it mean… to realize the truth?" I bit my lip as I pondered on those words and the ones before.

Mama smiled, "it means you will harness the secrets of the Versi from this star and many more. A secret you will be bound to dutifully hold. It will mean your entire perspective in life will change, no longer will your wife, friends, and children be your sole focus as the Versi have tasks that far outweigh the selfish."

"But I won't be barred from my wife, my friends, or my children?" My hands lowered to hold my belly gently. The feeling of the Aethers that swirled within intermingling as triplets playing among the stars.

Mama shook her head, "You will never be barred from life" I tried to understand, but even now I realized the implications of the secret. To follow in my mother's footsteps and become the thing I always looked up to and wished to be. Another memory rushed up like a flood of warmth as I pushed and struggled to stand, the sound of a little girl's voice echoed within my thoughts, "I wanna go to the stars Mama, I wanna be an astronaut!" as she spoke to her mother in secret. As I finally stood tall and turned my neck to stare off into the distance where I knew my wife waited for me, I turned back to the woman that was always there for me when I needed it the most.

"Listen to your past self, blossom. Look into your heart and realize the truth and let us look out for you as we have done for years before and to come." I blinked at the woman's words as the little girl repeated itself and with a breath I took a step into Mama's arms, and then another, eventually standing in her warmth as the world melted away.

As I turned my sight to nothing, I was not surprised as I reached my hand out towards the woman before me, no longer did she or the others wear visages of others; They all wore my face staring back comfortingly. "Let us become astronauts and bring stars to the sky, cherish the light that we bring through the song of the universe. Not only are we discoverers but creators in the vastness of ourselves."

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