Caged in the Belly of Malign Truth

‘I am cold and alone’ is Nara’s response as the shifting of the inner gut jostles its contents to and fro. A gush of water filling its floor to her knees in stomach acid, eaten sea life, and inevitable death of those that could not escape. A not so new concept to Nara is the grunting and complaining of a beast much more annoying then the kraken she resides in.

“Stupid Child, what exactly was your plan? Now we are both locked in this beast” is Kildren’s annoying growl that meets deaf ears. Nara’s fingers holding the white bone, a femur, of a lost friend. The sharp knife cutting and shaving pieces from its length. Every so often she hisses in pain as the dagger pierces her hand staining the fur, that matted with saltwater and gunk form the floor, with blood. Kildren grunts once more, before shifting to stare out past the guts wobbling sphincter that connects to the creature’s intestines further in.

“Fine then, what is it you carve with your fingers and blade?” is the bronze dragons next attempt at conversation. This does not end on deaf ears as Nara turns her head and shifts her body to draw herself closer to the warmth of the dragon.

“It’s a flute. My other one was lost in the fight. I figured it might shut your negative nattering up, but I don’t know if you even know what that means… Stupid Dragon” is Nara’s response, dripping with the poison of sarcasm . There is quiet that follows as the chamber fills with another gush of water. A hiss breaks the silence as Nara and the Dragon stare down at her legs. The fur is matted in acid burning away slightly at her skin and drying it to a peel. ‘It doesn’t hurt anymore…’ is her thoughts before she turns her head to stare at the snout of the dragon who peers down upon her. Kildren looks concerned as he turns to stare back into her eyes.

“I know how it hurts little kitten so do not lie to me, it is honorable I suppose to take such suffering for me and the others. If you hadn’t went with your gods awful, dare I say it, friends you would be safe right now and we wouldn’t be in this situation.” Nara’s eyes dart to glare into the dragon’s amber ones her mouth opened in a hiss. Kildren wavers his head with a sigh, “I didn’t mean it as an insult clearly… What am I to do with such fragility?” The duo grows quiet as they both turn to their own tasks of emotions.

‘I don’t know what to do, why can’t I figure this out, papa what am I supposed to do? I feel so alone now; everyone has left me…’ Nara’s thoughts still as tears join the saltwater below. Her eyes pressed closed, the tight strain of muscles causing her to twist her fingers into fists.

“Do I need to remind you that I am here, Tomsfellow. Let alone that your friends didn’t leave you. You got a message from one of them, right? The changeling?” Nara stills, Kildren’s words shocked her, and her fists uncurl. “Your father watches I am sure, both of them, your mothers too. But you

have a point we need to figure out what we are gunna do with you... how am I to trust you on your own with those vagabonds if you can't protect yourself."

"I can be stronger, I know I can" Nara stands as she speaks, turning her head to look about the creature's belly for the weak points. Her eyes darting back and forth with a deep, fear driven, determination

"We have been over this; we must wait till we have healed some before we start tearing holes in this creature. We will…" the dragon's words are muted by the sound a thunder that booms within the chamber as Nara's clawless fingers begin digging into the belly's flesh. It wobbles and stretches against the force, but no damage is done. A few more booms fill the chamber each time as Kildren watches before lashing his tail out to grab at Nara pulling her from the walls.

"I want out, I want out, I hate being in here, it feels like everything is shrinking like a cage! Like a burning room…" Her voice beginning as a struggle against Kildren that ends in a whisper of shock as she gives up shrinking into herself as she is pressed against the draconic form.

"Little Nara, we will find a way out and we must be prepared for the battle to come as this creature will not let us go easily; its master wont like that. Which means we need our resources when the time comes, so stop wasting your breath on a wall that wont move." Nara does not shift and remains quiet against the dragon her arms wrapping around its tail. "I have seen your dreams, they may not understand your pain, but they will appreciate your determination stupid child. But its clear now that we must stick together, and we must make you strong against the elements that try to tear you asunder. And the others that come to take you away for their own plans. To do that I need help, are you ready to throw aside foolishness now?"

Again, there is quiet as another gush passes by, Kildren's claw reaching for a bone white shape in the waters and plucking the carved flute from the floor. "First, we need to rest and get out of here, how about you finish this, what was it?"

Nara raises her head before shaking it to fall tired against the dragon's belly as he turns onto his side. "It's a flute, you stupid dragon."

"Well whatever you call it, make music and sing me to sleep or something as payment for protecting you" Kildren closes his eyes as Nara's light fades away again, before flaring back to life . "And when the time comes, we will escape this cage and I will turn you into a survivor; a warrior. Like the riders my mother used to tell me about, well that's before she tried to kill me."

The quiet belly is contested by the sound of Nara's carving of bone as she continues on her flute. Her face set in a stare at her hands as she is trying to keep the thought of a burning room and the sight of the heavy beam falling against her mother's body from her mind; trying to rupture the bubbling fear that grips hard to clutch at her heart.

"Oh Kay… I can do this" falls from her lips only this time they are met with a different set of deaf ears. The soft purring and snoring of Kildren creating a white noise. ' I will do this papa, like you and mama asked me to… I will be strong… I will get back to my friends, to help them… to save them…' Each word interrupted as her eyes lull closed, Kildren's claw coming to pull her further into

his embrace of warmth. ‘I’m alone again…’

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