

Three days till Weather Fall festival

Mei wrung the perfumed cleaning water from his rag and then started to wipe the floor with it. His body in a downward dog position as he ran across the juniper wood floor. Xukali on the other side of him with a dry rag to sop up the water to prevent the wood from getting water damage, then she asked.

“Have time to go to the workers meeting tonight.”

The worker's meeting wasn't actually any type of professional meetup, it was a party for the workers who couldn't make the festival because they were the ones that were running it. It's just that the party wasn't exclusive to those people. And the Sect allowed it to keep the workers that kept the fun running from ruining said fun.

“Sorry, I've got a strict schedule.”

“You mean your parents.”

“Well, yes,” he hesitated a little

“Well then why not disobey it a little, you're less than three days away from turning three Leviathan Falls old. Basically a full-grown man by now.”

“Yeah, but they're my parents.”

“So what? I know how they treat you.”

“You've never even seen them, how would you know that.” A hint of edge coming into his voice

“I don't have to see them. I just have to see you.”

“I don't know how I should take that.”

Xukali rolled her eyes, “It's how you talk about them, and how you act whenever something about them comes up. I may not have your social graces, but I can still read people.”

“They know best, so, so. Ah fine, I'll bring it up, and we'll what comes from there.”

“If they say no you better sneak out for me.”

“No.”

“Please.”

“No,” he said slightly stronger

“Fine, fine.”

OOO

Mei flopped down onto his bed. Feeling like he'd been mentally carved out. He hadn't brought it up during dinner. He just sat at the end of the table, silent, alone but surrounded by people that he knew since the day he was born. And every time he did try to talk about the meeting it felt like a vindictive stone lodged itself into his throat, telling him to shut up.

Isn't it easier to just be alone, not to have to think about every word to avoid a beating, to not be seen, to not be heard, and think that they can do what they want because you are inferior? isn't that right?

Sometimes he could just feel the world falling onto him, putting their anger into him, it felt better to just be alone. To just feel like he was floating in a void. With nothing to bother him. Isn't that right? it said

But the world wasn't like that, he couldn't just disappear into a void. Fall into the Depths below the sea, below the earth, forever below creation with the resting corpse of the Sea Mother. Nothing's stopping you from trying.

Maybe... no, if he did the twins would be idiots and get themselves into trouble. With him not there to bail them out they'd have to call in father. And he was sure that Xukali would miss. Maybe, who knows? But really, you two only really know each other from work, can you say you don't wear a mask around her? And can you honestly say she doesn't do the same?

No, but she said that she'd pay for food during the festival. And I agreed, so I have to find a way to repay her, or I'd be breaking my promise. And well, if going to the meeting would repay that even just a fraction, shouldn't I do that

But how though? You're stuck here like a pathetic and you can do nothing about that. So just give up.

Mei thought back to the conversation she and him had earlier that day.

OOO

Mei hung from the window frame, shallow breaths coming quickly. He tried to take a deep breath but it didn't feel any deeper.

"The drops only ten or so feet Mei, hanging like this, it's only what, a two-foot, two and a half foot drop, that's nothing at all," He tried to tell himself

Mei looked up, cursing at himself. Trying to steel himself

He took a few more deep breaths, but they did nothing, so he closed his eyes, slowly releasing his grip on the wood. His breathing accelerated as the wind rushed past his ears and his body felt weightless, Oh depths how long is this going to last? And before he could finish his thought his feet hit the ground flat. Pain shot up from his legs to his back. Making him lose his balance and fall onto his but.

Cursing he got up onto his feet, wiping the dirt off his pants. When he heard someone behind him.

"Didn't think I'd find you out here."

Mei jumped, turning to his brother Ko'ipo standing nonchalantly.

"What are you- wait- uh- sorry!" Mei blurted out

Ko'ipo chuckled, "First time?"

"First time what?"

"Sneaking out the house, I could never do it from the window. My room window is facing towards the cliff, I had to learn what floorboards creaked and became very good at closing the front door softly."

"Oh, um, ok?"

"So where are you going, maybe a girl or a party perchance?" he said with a devilish tone.

"The uh, um... the Workers Meetup, that's what it's called."

"So a party hound I see, I can walk you there, I know where the building is. And the guards usually don't let people arriving late in for the meetup," he said the last word with a hefty serving of sarcasm.

“Oh, uh ok, thanks.” They started up the path to the Sect.

A couple of moments of awkward silence persisted, making Mei feel like he had to say something.

so he blurted out, “I’m going there because somebody asked me to go there, her name’s uh, shes, her name is Xukali.” He had to slowly and rigidly speak to get the last portion out.

“Oh, a ladies' man too I see.”

“No. Not like that” Mei said calmly

“Oh, do I see a blush,”

He didn’t.

“It’s not like that,” he said more persistently

Mei had never really felt any deep connection or attraction to anyone like some of the romance stories the older Time Archivests told the children. A lot of them involved kidnapping for some reason.

“If you say so,” Ko’ipo said in a sing-soigne voice

“Ok, so uh, where are you going tonight?”

“Oh, I’m meeting up with a friend, his name’s Kai’ilu. We’re going to the cherry blossom ridge, you know the one facing ocean side.”

“Oh cool, I wish it was spring, I’d love to go there. Oh did you know that the ridge is where the first Grand Patriarch married his wife under the night sky? And I hear couples go there during the night for good luck. I always liked that story over all the one’s about kidnapping, you know.”

“Oh, OH, I-I did not know that um, it was a spot for couples to.... get together,” Ko’ipo stumbled over his words

Mei looked up at his brother. His face was a little flushed, his eyes darting around, looking at everything but him.

“You ok?”

“Can you not tell Dad, or just anyone,” Ko’ipo looked at Mei, face tense, “Please,” he extended his plea.

“About... what exactly? If you’re worried about me telling Father about you sneaking out you got the exact same dirt on me.”

“Oh, yes right, I guess that’s what,” Ko’ipo took a deep breath and straightened his back, “Yes, that was my intention.”

“Ok?”

They walked together in what Mei thought should’ve been an awkward silence. But it just didn’t have the same tension it usually had. But when he looked at his brother Mei could feel it coming off him in waves. As they continued walking up the dark chalk-white cobble paths, with only cold light from the Sea Pearl lanterns. Mei thought about what his brother said. Then a realization hit him.

“Wait, are you dating Kai’ilu?”

“No... maybe, for a bit, it’s weird,” Ko’ipo said. Each word got smaller as he talked like grain funneling down to be ground into flour.

“Why are you hiding it?”

“Well I um, I asked Dad about it, how he felt about two guys is what I mean. And well, that’s why.”

“Why?” Mei looked at his brother's face, “Oh, is it that thing about how we’re supposed to mimic the Sky Father and the Sea Mother? And if we don’t we’re doomed to the limbo of the Hurricane and stuff?”

“Yeah.”

Ko’ipo slumped, and Mei could see him shaking a little, mostly around the shoulders. Mei stood frozen, not knowing what to do, he only knew people when he was trying to avoid them or when they went after him. Not... this, the rawness of people’s emotions was not unfamiliar to him, just not from this direction.

Not knowing what else to do Mei patted Ko’ipo on the back, going on his tippy-toes to reach. Arm stiffly moving in circles. After just a few brief moments Ko’ipo straightened up, wiping the beginning of the tears in his eyes.

“Sorry, I’m the big brother here. Aren’t I supposed to be the one doing this to you, like when you scrap your knee and start sniffing like a big old baby.”

“...Ok,?” Mei limply replied.

“Dad’s being a sun-blinded jerk isn’t he!” Ko’ipo yelled out, more angry than sad  
“Right.”

They went back and forth about how horrible their dad was, well mostly Ko’ipo, but most of them just sounded like how a parent usually acted. Screaming, threats, and occasionally hitting, but Ko’ipo said only something recent, just confused Mew more and more. But he was thinking of something else, “I’m the big brother here. Aren’t I supposed to be the one doing this to you?” Those were his words. But he hadn’t, none of them had, the only time he had supported him was when they gave him money for the festival.

The only time before that was before he had awakened his Spirit Avatar. He didn’t like to think of that time or any time he’d used it after. The weeks of nausea after, not being able to walk because his legs felt like they had been turned to air and then put on backward. His eyes hurt like a needle was shoved into them from behind. Being unable to eat without throwing up everything in his gut. Then for weeks after the nausea, his body felt like it was in a fever, but being forced to work anyway.

Mei shook his head, forcing the memories to the back of his mind, trying to ignore its whispers. Forcing himself to listen to his brother, consoling Ko’ipo as he was cursing out their father. Because isn’t that what families are supposed to do?

OOO

Xukali drank her sorghum beer, it was also technically a Rum since it used sugar cane imported far up south from the Earthen Flame Sect. She didn’t know how the people that brewed years batch had gotten a hold of it considering the closest you could find it was two hundred miles away. Though it tasted decent, sweet, and beery? Admittedly she never cared for

the taste of anything really. As long as it wasn't bile or poisonous she would eat it, the second one was negotiable depending on how close an apothecary was.

She looked around the large warehouse that was only starting to have trouble containing people, trying to find Mei. She liked parties, but she could never really join in the fun by herself, the booming bass rhythm of the drums, accompanied the shrillness of the whistles and cracking rattles. The room of people moving in a pattern all knew but did not know. That all felt alien to her without someone, a guide, someone to introduce her to things she was fenced out of. Now that she thought of it Mei was probably not the best person to do that.

But she didn't really know anyone else. She knew of people, but they were distant, she didn't mind it most of the time. But it was damned annoying at times like these. Now that she thought about it, oh depths she probably pushed him away, she was just being cruel with her words. Twisting and bending his arm because she was annoyed. Now she'd probably broken their relationship for the most petty of reasons. Depths she was horrible sometimes. And she'd know his parents were control freaks.

Then she felt someone tap her shoulder. She jumped, turning around to slap whoever thought could do that. Then she saw Mei's face, putting her hand down.

"I thought you weren't coming, the beer rum kegs are half gone! by know" Xukali yelled over the people and music to be heard, forgetting her worries

"Oh, um, almost didn't."

"Oh really? Did you pull out a heartfelt speech about love or something at the last minute, bringing a tear to their eye? Finally getting their acceptance just in the nick of time for you to run here to me. Oh, you heartthrob."

"Hmm, well something like that."

"So tell me?"

"Tell you what?"

"How did you get them to agree?"

"Oh, yeah, um, I took your advice to heart, and well, sneaked out the window."

Xukali stared at him trying to see if he was an impostor, "I meant that as a joke."

"Well," he splayed his hand out, shrugging, "I'm here, aren't I?"

After a couple more moments of staring she finally said, "Ah, I guess that's all that matters."

They stood around awkwardly, mostly trying to avoid the people around them. Just wandering, but then Xukali had an idea. She brought Mei to the three remaining child-sized kegs of the booze.

"What is it," Mei asked holding the cup to his nose, pulling away from it after smelling it.

"Sorghum beer, it also has sugarcane it, so it's kinda funky. Probably nothing like you've ever tasted before," she said with half-hidden glee

"In a good or bad way."

"Taste is subjective, isn't it?"

Mei grumbled for a little bit, then said, "Never like beer, hopes to the sweet cane thing making it taste better."

Mei lifted his head, taking a small sip. Then immediately choked and let it dribble out of his mouth, onto his clothes.

While Xukali was laboriously laughing, while Mei babbled out still gagging at the taste, “Depths below, it tastes like bitter bread mixed with rotten fruit. But like without that fruit thing that makes fruit fruity, so it’s just rotten and it’s mixed with something I hate! And it’s sitting on my tongue, oh I can still taste it, oh no, no, no, no. Please dear Sea Mother, and Sky Father, please get rid of this, just get rid of it, oh depths I’m going to throw up.”

Xukali helped Mei out of the building, leading him to a small spring so he could wash out his mouth. Luckily without vomit. Xukali giggled all the way.

And on the way back Mei said, “Sometimes I hate you.”

The words just making Xukali laugh more.

“How do you even stomach that stuff, it’s vile sourced directly from the Leviathan Depths!” he said with more conviction than Xukali had ever heard, much less from him.

“Guess I’m just better than you, eh, eh?”

Mei just walked silently, stewing in his grumpiness.

They made it back to the building, the music in full tilt. Both of them stood in the back, swaying to the beat. Slowly joining in with the dance. Taking one step after the other, with each other. Moving in a trance-like state, with the noise surrounding them till nothing else existed for them. Floating in that void-like space. Then they heard something.

Grating hate against decaying sentries

The Epitaph flowing directly into their minds. Shoving itself into their head, filling them with a cracking headache. They stumbled out of the trance. But the words still tried to shove itself into their head, in a broken string.

Daylight, Faites, Entries, Fell Livs, Gyte, Plights, Fruit Trees. Crimson Kings NiFe

There, then gone. Words fell from Xukali’s head, their meaning being wiped before they could be heard. She looked around her, massaging her temple, seeing the swaths of random people including Mei had stopped to hold their heads. Like her. Or in some cases curled up on the floor. But luckily Mei and herself had gotten the better end of it.

A small wave of panic went through the room, people started to whisper. But no one started to go into fight or flight. Which struck Xukali as weird, she had to ask Mei what had happened.

There’s no need to worry.

A wave of bliss and calmness came over her. She didn’t need to worry about this.

Or talk about it right?

Yeah, there wasn’t, wait no this felt wrong, very, very wrong.

Not everything has to be wrong, you can have fun and rest, no need for you to worry right now.

That felt right though. She, Mei, along with the other hundred or so workers started to dance again. Along with the musicians, the ones that had fallen to the floor got up slower but started to dance once again. Not knowing what happened

OOO

Ralu (Prison cell)

Ralu had to pull l'ani away from the wooden bars of the cell for the second time that Night.

"I swear to Fu'uani'i the tide-turner that I'll burn these bars away, then do the exact same thing to your balls!" he hollered as Ralu pulled him by the back of his shirt collar.

"Oh really, a Fomor half-breed is going to do all that?" the drunk man slurred

"Fomor don't even exist where I'm from, you uneducated halfwit frog!"

As they argued Ralu felt weird being more mature than someone they knew was at least 100 years older than them, probably more.

"I'm uneducated." The tall brown-haired young Rich man from the Leviathan Kin Sect scoffed incredulously, "You can barely speak proper O'ozhiwu, you sound more like a frog than I do. Fomor," he stretched out the last word

Ralu rolled their eyes at that outright lie, they were using a sacred artifact to translate their speech nearly perfectly, it only sounded a bit stilted

"Speak that to my face, I'm a star-damned-"

l'ani stopped speaking when Ralu covered his mouth, they then proceeded to stuff plugs into his ears. Turning him around so that he couldn't see the man they hadn't gotten the name of. Or intended to for that matter.

They knew little about why he was here, just that he'd gotten drunk enough to get himself locked up by the Sects Black Spear guards. And since he was from the Leviathan Kin sect he was probably also in the tournament. But they didn't care about them, so Ralu kept l'ani in what they creatively called the "Shut up" corner of the room. They made it after he'd delayed their release for over a week because he kept getting into stuff like this.

Ralu had tried to negotiate with the guards that it was the other person's fault. But they're two strangers in a strange land that didn't like said stranger, so nearly two weeks in jail for them. And tomorrow would be their last day if l'ani didn't get into any more arguments, and Ralu would make sure of it.

They laid down on the wooden slab called a bed, gesturing for l'ani to do the same. After about ten minutes the practitioner finally stopped trying to goad them, and they finally started drifting off. Then something bombarded their mind.

Grating hate against decaying sentries

Daylight, Faites, Entries, Fell Livs, Gyte, Plights, Fruit Trees. Crimson Kings NiFe

Their mind filled with static pain, like they're struck with lightning, the electricity flowing through their brain and eyes. Ralu sat up, nearly falling off. But I'ani was beside them in a second, their blanket drifting down to the floor, stopping Ralu from falling to the stone floor.

"Gah!" They're about to ask a question

Oh, there's no need to worry, just lay down.

A torrent of sleepiness fell onto Ralu, sounding like a good idea they started to lay back on the wooden slab.

"Sea and stars, you think you'd learn by now," I'ani said amused

He summoned his Spirit Avatar, the shark-tooth sword, and then three small icons formed in the air at its tip. A sun, a shield, and an inferno. They converged into one small ball of bright purple light. Illuminating the room in such intense light that Ralu thought it was going to explode.

Then something was exposed in the light, it was a small blue humanoid figure. Kneeling at their bed, whispering into their ear. It had a body and face made of hands, the legs made from dark smoke. And where its real fingers were supposed to be were things twisted backward and all wrong, splintering bone jutting out where no bone was supposed to be. As the light enveloped it started to screech and plead for mercy, begging, all it wanted was to live. Then it was gone with the light.

Ralu sat, shaking, only hearing their breathing in the sudden darkness of the room, then asked, "Was" Ralu swallowed, clenching their hands, "Was that one of The Others?"

"Yes."

"The Hell's were those word!" they demanded in a whisper

"It was..." he hesitated, "That was a message, an uh, Epitaph from my sister, I think it was only for me, but it broke somehow. And broadcast-ed to everyone near me"

"Is the message a good thing?"

"Probably, The Others are trying to stop it."

"Why was it just a line, and broken words."

He shrugged, "It broke."

"Why was it important?"

"Because she was the only one that knew how to kill them. And I think that message was meant to tell me how."

hree days till Weather Fall festival

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"Have time to go to the workers meeting tonight."

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"Sorry, I've got a strict schedule."



"You mean your parents."

"Well, yes," he hesitated a little

"Well then why not disobey it a little, you're less than three days away from turning three Leviathan Falls old. Basically a full-grown man by now."

"Yeah, but they're my parents."

"So what? I know how they treat you."

"You've never even seen them, how would you know that." A hint of edge coming into his voice

"I don't have to see them. I just have to see you."

"I don't know how I should take that."

Xukali rolled her eyes, "It's how you talk about them, and how you act whenever something about them comes up. I may not have your social graces, but I can still read people."

"They know best, so, so. Ah fine, I'll bring it up, and we'll what comes from there."

"If they say no you better sneak out for me."

"No."

"Please."

"No," he said slightly stronger

"Fine, fine."

OOO

Mei flopped down onto his bed. Feeling like he'd been mentally carved out. He hadn't brought it up during dinner. He just sat at the end of the table, silent, alone but surrounded by people that he knew since the day he was born. And every time he did try to talk about the meeting it felt like a vindictive stone lodged itself into his throat, telling him to shut up.

Isn't it easier to just be alone, not to have to think about every word to avoid a beating, to not be seen, to not be heard, and think that they can do what they want because you are inferior? isn't that right?

Sometimes he could just feel the world falling onto him, putting their anger into him, it felt better to just be alone. To just feel like he was floating in a void. With nothing to bother him.

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Nothing's stopping you from trying.

Maybe... no, if he did the twins would be idiots and get themselves into trouble. With him not there to bail them out they'd have to call in father. And he was sure that Xukali would miss.

Maybe, who knows? But really, you two only really know each other from work, can you say you don't wear a mask around her? And can you honestly say she doesn't do the same?

No, but she said that she'd pay for food during the festival. And I agreed, so I have to find a way to repay her, or I'd be breaking my promise. And well, if going to the meeting would repay that even just a fraction, shouldn't I do that

But how though? You're stuck here like a pathetic and you can do nothing about that. So just give up.

Mei thought back to the conversation she and him had earlier that day.

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"Didn't think I'd find you out here."

Mei jumped, turning to his brother Ko'ipo standing nonchalantly.

"What are you- wait- uh- sorry!" Mei blurted out

Ko'ipo chuckled, "First time?"

"First time what?"

"Sneaking out the house, I could never do it from the window. My room window is facing towards the cliff, I had to learn what floorboards creaked and became very good at closing the front door softly."

"Oh, um, ok?"

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"Oh, uh ok, thanks." They started up the path to the Sect.

A couple of moments of awkward silence persisted, making Mei feel like he had to say something.

so he blurted out, "I'm going there because somebody asked me to go there, her name's uh, shes, her name is Xukali." He had to slowly and rigidly speak to get the last portion out.

"Oh, a ladies' man too I see."

"No. Not like that" Mei said calmly

"Oh, do I see a blush,"

He didn't.

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"Ok, so uh, where are you going tonight?"

"Oh, I'm meeting up with a friend, his name's Kai'ilu. We're going to the cherry blossom ridge, you know the one facing ocean side."

"Oh cool, I wish it was spring, I'd love to go there. Oh did you know that the ridge is where the first Grand Patriarch married his wife under the night sky? And I hear couples go there during the night for good luck. I always liked that story over all the one's about kidnapping, you know."

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"You ok?"

"Can you not tell Dad, or just anyone," Ko'ipo looked at Mei, face tense, "Please," he extended his plea.

"About... what exactly? If you're worried about me telling Father about you sneaking out you got the exact same dirt on me."

"Oh, yes right, I guess that's what," Ko'ipo took a deep breath and straightened his back, "Yes, that was my intention."

"Ok?"

They walked together in what Mei thought should've been an awkward silence. But it just didn't have the same tension it usually had. But when he looked at his brother Mei could feel it coming off him in waves. As they continued walking up the dark chalk-white cobble paths, with only cold light from the Sea Pearl lanterns. Mei thought about what his brother said. Then a realization hit him.

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"Why are you hiding it?"

"Well I um, I asked Dad about it, how he felt about two guys is what I mean. And well, that's why."

"Why?" Mei looked at his brother's face, "Oh, is it that thing about how we're supposed to mimic the Sky Father and the Sea Mother? And if we don't we're doomed to the limbo of the Hurricane and stuff?"

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Xukali drank her sorghum beer, it was also technically a Rum since it used sugar cane imported far up south from the Earthen Flame Sect. She didn’t know how the people that brewed years batch had gotten a hold of it considering the closest you could find it was two hundred miles away. Though it tasted decent, sweet, and beery? Admittedly she never cared for the taste of anything really. As long as it wasn’t bile or poisonous she would eat it, the second one was negotiable depending on how close an apothecary was.

She looked around the large warehouse that was only starting to have trouble containing people, trying to find Mei. She liked parties, but she could never really join in the fun by herself, the booming bass rhythm of the drums, accompanied the shrillness of the whistles and cracking rattles. The room of people moving in a pattern all knew but did not know. That all felt alien to her without someone, a guide, someone to introduce her to things she was fenced out of. Now that she thought of it Mei was probably not the best person to do that.

But she didn’t really know anyone else. She knew of people, but they were distant, she didn’t mind it most of the time. But it was damned annoying at times like these. Now that she thought about it, oh depths she probably pushed him away, she was just being cruel with her words. Twisting and bending his arm because she was annoyed. Now she’d probably broken their

relationship for the most petty of reasons. Depths she was horrible sometimes. And she'd know his parents were control freaks.

Then she felt someone tap her shoulder. She jumped, turning around to slap whoever thought could do that. Then she saw Mei's face, putting her hand down.

"I thought you weren't coming, the beer rum kegs are half gone! by know" Xukali yelled over the people and music to be heard, forgetting her worries

"Oh, um, almost didn't."

"Oh really? Did you pull out a heartfelt speech about love or something at the last minute, bringing a tear to their eye? Finally getting their acceptance just in the nick of time for you to run here to me. Oh, you heartthrob."

"Hmm, well something like that."

"So tell me?"

"Tell you what?"

"How did you get them to agree?"

"Oh, yeah, um, I took your advice to heart, and well, sneaked out the window."

Xukali stared at him trying to see if he was an impostor, "I meant that as a joke."

"Well," he played his hand out, shrugging, "I'm here, aren't I?"

After a couple more moments of staring she finally said, "Ah, I guess that's all that matters."

They stood around awkwardly, mostly trying to avoid the people around them. Just wandering, but then Xukali had an idea. She brought Mei to the three remaining child-sized kegs of the booze.

"What is it," Mei asked holding the cup to his nose, pulling away from it after smelling it.

"Sorghum beer, it also has sugarcane it, so it's kinda funky. Probably nothing like you've ever tasted before," she said with half-hidden glee

"In a good or bad way."

"Taste is subjective, isn't it?"

Mei grumbled for a little bit, then said, "Never like beer, hopes to the sweet cane thing making it taste better."

Mei lifted his head, taking a small sip. Then immediately choked and let it dribble out of his mouth, onto his clothes.

While Xukali was laboriously laughing, while Mei babbled out still gagging at the taste, "Depths below, it tastes like bitter bread mixed with rotten fruit. But like without that fruit thing that makes fruit fruity, so it's just rotten and it's mixed with something I hate! And it's sitting on my tongue, oh I can still taste it, oh no, no, no, no. Please dear Sea Mother, and Sky Father, please get rid of this, just get rid of it, oh depths I'm going to throw up."

Xukali helped Mei out of the building, leading him to a small spring so he could wash out his mouth. Luckily without vomit. Xukali giggled all the way.

And on the way back Mei said, "Sometimes I hate you."

The words just making Xukali laugh more.

"How do you even stomach that stuff, it's vile sourced directly from the Leviathan Depths!" he said with more conviction than Xukali had ever heard, much less from him.

“Guess I’m just better than you, eh, eh?”

Mei just walked silently, stewing in his grumpiness.

They made it back to the building, the music in full tilt. Both of them stood in the back, swaying to the beat. Slowly joining in with the dance. Taking one step after the other, with each other. Moving in a trance-like state, with the noise surrounding them till nothing else existed for them. Floating in that void-like space. Then they heard something.

Grating hate against decaying sentries

The Epitaph flowing directly into their minds. Shoving itself into their head, filling them with a cracking headache. They stumbled out of the trance. But the words still tried to shove itself into their head, in a broken string.

Daylight, Faites, Entries, Fell Livs, Gyte, Plights, Fruit Trees. Crimson Kings NiFe

There, then gone. Words fell from Xukali’s head, their meaning being wiped before they could be heard. She looked around her, massaging her temple, seeing the swaths of random people including Mei had stopped to hold their heads. Like her. Or in some cases curled up on the floor. But luckily Mei and herself had gotten the better end of it.

A small wave of panic went through the room, people started to whisper. But no one started to go into fight or flight. Which struck Xukali as weird, she had to ask Mei what had happened. There’s no need to worry.

A wave of bliss and calmness came over her. She didn’t need to worry about this.

Or talk about it right?

Yeah, there wasn’t, wait no this felt wrong, very, very wrong.

Not everything has to be wrong, you can have fun and rest, no need for you to worry right now.

That felt right though. She, Mei, along with the other hundred or so workers started to dance again. Along with the musicians, the ones that had fallen to the floor got up slower but started to dance once again. Not knowing what happened

OOO

Ralu (Prison cell)

Ralu had to pull I’ani away from the wooden bars of the cell for the second time that Night.

“I swear to Fu’uani’i the tide-turner that I’ll burn these bars away, then do the exact same thing to your balls!” he hollered as Ralu pulled him by the back of his shirt collar.

“Oh really, a Fomor half-breed is going to do all that?” the drunk man slurred

“Fomor don’t even exist where I’m from, you uneducated halfwit frog!”

As they argued Ralu felt weird being more mature than someone they knew was at least 100 years older than them, probably more.

“I’m uneducated.” The tall brown-haired young Rich man from the Leviathan Kin Sect scoffed incredulously, “You can barely speak proper O’ozhiwu, you sound more like a frog than I do. Fomor,” he stretched out the last word

Ralu rolled their eyes at that outright lie, they were using a sacred artifact to translate their speech nearly perfectly, it only sounded a bit stilted

“Speak that to my face, I’m a star-damned-”

I’ani stopped speaking when Ralu covered his mouth, they then proceeded to stuff plugs into his ears. Turning him around so that he couldn’t see the man they hadn’t gotten the name of. Or intended to for that matter.

They knew little about why he was here, just that he’d gotten drunk enough to get himself locked up by the Sects Black Spear guards. And since he was from the Leviathan Kin sect he was probably also in the tournament. But they didn’t care about them, so Ralu kept I’ani in what they creatively called the “Shut up” corner of the room. They made it after he’d delayed their release for over a week because he kept getting into stuff like this.

Ralu had tried to negotiate with the guards that it was the other person’s fault. But they’re two strangers in a strange land that didn’t like said stranger, so nearly two weeks in jail for them. And tomorrow would be their last day if I’ani didn’t get into any more arguments, and Ralu would make sure of it.

They laid down on the wooden slab called a bed, gesturing for I’ani to do the same. After about ten minutes the practitioner finally stopped trying to goad them, and they finally started drifting off. Then something bombarded their mind.

Grating hate against decaying sentries

Daylight, Faites, Entries, Fell Livs, Gyte, Plichts, Fruit Trees. Crimson Kings NiFe

Their mind filled with static pain, like they’re struck with lightning, the electricity flowing through their brain and eyes. Ralu sat up, nearly falling off. But I’ani was beside them in a second, their blanket drifting down to the floor, stopping Ralu from falling to the stone floor.

“Gah!” They’re about to ask a question

Oh, there’s no need to worry, just lay down.

A torrent of sleepiness fell onto Ralu, sounding like a good idea they started to lay back on the wooden slab.

“Sea and stars, you think you’d learn by now,” I’ani said amused

He summoned his Spirit Avatar, the shark-tooth sword, and then three small icons formed in the air at its tip. A sun, a shield, and an inferno. They converged into one small ball of bright purple light. Illuminating the room in such intense light that Ralu thought it was going to explode.

Then something was exposed in the light, it was a small blue humanoid figure. Kneeling at their bed, whispering into their ear. It had a body and face made of hands, the legs made from dark smoke. And where its real fingers were supposed to be were things twisted backward and all

wrong, splintering bone jutting out where no bone was supposed to be. As the light enveloped it started to screech and plead for mercy, begging, all it wanted was to live. Then it was gone with the light.

Ralu sat, shaking, only hearing their breathing in the sudden darkness of the room, then asked, "Was" Ralu swallowed, clenching their hands, "Was that one of The Others?"

"Yes."

"The Hell's were those word!" they demanded in a whisper

"It was..." he hesitated, "That was a message, an uh, Epitaph from my sister, I think it was only for me, but it broke somehow. And broadcast-ed to everyone near me"

"Is the message a good thing?"

"Probably, The Others are trying to stop it."

"Why was it just a line, and broken words."

He shrugged, "It broke."

"Why was it important?"

"Because she was the only one that knew how to kill them. And I think that message was meant to tell me how."