

“Nour,” the young griffin turned only his upper half to see who had called him. His eyes soon widened when he spotted who they were, and he began to drop to one knee.

“None of that, young man,” Erastus corrects, wishing to smile, but it falls before it can even think to take form. “You know you are already like family to us.”

More out of respect than tradition, Nour bowed his upper half, glancing up at the man he feels has become his second father. Perhaps even more so at times.

“I do not wish to keep you, but be patient with them. They are ...” he trails off as he thinks about the little child in the room before him. The confusion in their eyes as they look at him and how long it takes them to finally realize who he is. “The doctors said they may experience amnesia, but -”

“Amnesia?” Nour questions, repeating the word far slower.

“It is when one forgets some of their memories.” Nour’s eyes widen in fear, but Erastus’ light chuckles calm him enough to relax his shoulders. “It is not permanent nor something to worry about. It is simply a side effect due to the work of the physicians. I tell you simply, so you do not panic if they do not recognize you first.” Nour nods and, with permission granted, walks into the room where his best friend rests.

A wall of plants rests on one side, Nour can only name one or two, and even then, he doubts himself. The rest of the room looks like it always does. Wooden toys sitting in a vine-woven basket, clothes hanging from an open closet, and

“Genesis?” he questions, grabbing a stool as he comes to her side. He watches as eyelids part, giving way to peach-colored eyes that always manage to enrapture him. They swivel his way and narrow in scrutiny. He holds his breath. The fear of his best friend not recognizing him is a warning he heard but not one he finds himself ready to experience.

“Nour? What are you doing here?” Releasing a thankful breath, he prepares to answer, but they continue. “Where am I? Why - why can’t I move? Nour, why can’t I

move?" Pain and fear cling to every word, and he finds himself feeling useless as he can do nothing but watch as their panic grows.

He places a hand on their shoulder, and they calm down, still awaiting an answer, "it's okay. I'm here. How about a story?"

They frown, disliking the idea of their questions being left unanswered but also being too enraptured by the idea of a story. They nod, a slow one that causes them to hiss in pain, but Nour swoops in again, diverting their attention.

"Have I ever told you about the golden griffin?"

"A golden griffin? You mean like your feathers?"

"Kinda. Mine are more a bright brown than gold."

"But your eyes," they smile as they gaze upon those same golden eyes with care.

"Oh, yea," Nour blushes, looking away as he fights the shyness that suddenly takes over, especially when they refuse to look away. Genesis' boldness has always been something he admired but also sometimes despised for the simple reason that it always made him feel so vulnerable. Such open honesty and curiosity for display always enraptured a young heart seeking adventure and companionship, and they gave it so freely.

"Well," Nour starts, clearing his throat as he gets comfortable, "there was a griffin born with no feathers. And their parents, I mean, his presents, no parents." Nour whimpers as he hides his face. He knows this story. He has forced his sister to tell it so many times that it almost feels impossible for him to forget it. Yet, here he is.

"The griffins' parents were scared that something was wrong," Genesis mutters, clearing their throat and offering a smile at Nour. With a deep inhale, he nods and takes back control.

"No one knew why the griffin had no feathers, and many of those in the nest believed the baby to be cursed. They avoided him and called for his banishment. He had no feathers and no way to fly. Those around his age thought it was exciting, but the

words of the older ones always rang through their heads and they turned their backs on him. He was ignored every day and watched as his parents cried in misunderstanding. Even when he told them that he was okay, they cried. And so, he ran away. He wandered the desert for many days and nights. There was no water and no companionship, only the sun overhead.

The god, Sun, watched him each day and wondered when the young griffin's heart would give out. When it did not, he asked what the griffin was searching for. Believing it was food and water, Sun sent out a mighty sandstorm causing the griffin to spend the night in a deep cavern. The cavern led to an underwater lake; there, the griffin drank and fished for food. When the sandstorm had ended, the griffin continued on.

Sun then believed it was companionship, so he sent a pair of snakes to befriend him. Though the griffin accepted the duo, he did not stop. Perhaps if the griffin was older, Sun would understand more. But he was too young to want so much, so Sun came to him. He asked the griffin what pushed him to cross such a desert, and the griffin pointed to the sun that still rested high overhead.

The griffin explained that if he kept going towards the sun, he could dip his featherless body into the pool of gold and return home, proving to all that he was now what they thought. Sun asked him why he cared, and the griffin answered that he didn't want his parents to cry. When Sun asked if that was all, the griffin nodded. He wanted nothing more than to make his parents proud.

Sun looked deep into the griffin's eyes and, finding no lie, told him that he had reached the sun. The griffin looked at him in confusion but before he could question anything, Sun disappeared. The griffin continued his journey, but the night was endless, the Sun never came up, and the griffin found himself lost. He wandered in circles, seeking out the orb, and when he couldn't, he began to cry.

He missed his parents dearly, and now that the sun was gone, he could never return home to see them. He didn't know that golden feathers were growing, standing out in the darkness like a beacon. That beacon was for the two griffins high in the sky, searching the rolling dunes for their runaway child. They saw the light and swooped

down, crying out of happiness to finally find their child. And Sun watched, smiling from up high. He would let the griffin keep his feathers. A beacon for all lost souls wishing to simply find those they love.”

Nour frowns, hoping he has told the story right. He feels like there's a part he missed or simply forgotten. But Genesis's weak smile tells him that it hardly matters.

“I love your stories,” they sigh, their fingers gripping the blanket tighter to their body.

“Are you cold?” Before they can even answer, he gets to his feet and adjusts the blanket, ensuring that it covers all of them and can not easily be pushed away. He feels eyes following him and pauses, looking to see them watching him with a curious gaze.

“What?”

“Can you tell me another?” A glance out the window tells Nour that his time is coming to an end. The sun departs the sky while his father's words to return before nightfall ring in his ears.

He sighs, closing his eyes before looking at the expecting young phoenix, and nods, “yea, I can tell one more.”