

Cut Scene from the original draft of

'Nightfall' by Kirstie Olley

Marrille's mind dwelled on nightfall and how everyone told a slightly different tale. Before long the desert passed and they were floating over rooves.

"Aim for the tower." Sario pointed to a thin stone finger of a building knifing into the sky. "On the other side's an opening 'n perches for landing. I'll go first and show ye how."

Marrille watched Sario flare his wings and land. She didn't know why he needed to show her. She'd landed on perches hundreds of times before.

He folded his wings and jumped from the perch, freeing it for her and she landed. He smiled and nodded as if impressed. There wasn't much to be impressed by.

"Put yer cloak back on," he said, pulling his from the basket and affixing it. "Make sure anyone who wants can see the clasp."

He told her things even a smidling would know. She masked her scowl and settled her cloak over both wings and shoulders, folding the collar up high so it brushed her earlobes.

He led her down a spiralling staircase like those in the eyrie, except these were built from wood rather than carved out of stone. He paused at the wooden door looking back at her, eyebrows merging into one fuzzy black line.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"Of course."

He smirked and she struggled to hide her scowl.

The door opened and it was like a sudden gust of storm wind slamming into her.

Such a clamour! Voices, footsteps, clothes rustling, people and things bumping into one another. The scent rushed in too. She could smell predators and prey, and food - vegetables and meats of more kinds than she could recognise racing at her all at once. She

rejoiced that she wasn't hound-nosed.

And the sights! There were more people in a single glance than in the entire eyrie. They bustled about, moving in and out of sight so fast she wondered if it might be illusion and these people were the same people simply stepping from view then popping back up somewhere else.

Those people though - there were a few others with wings, but there were also people with fur and tails, or tails and scales, there were even people who were plain and pink all over (at least as far as she could tell since they wore clothes). Pointed ears, floppy ears, long shaggy fur or short and bristly, there was even a fellow with quills bristling from his scalp and down his back.

Her books told her there were many types of people, but she'd never fully grasped the scope before.

She followed Sario's broad back, staring at the city around her. She almost lost sight of him when she paused, staring at a tall woman whose skin appeared to be made from stone like the Eyrie's. She only found him again because of his height, and though it shamed her to do so she grabbed a fistful of his cloak. He pretended not to notice her smidling-like behaviour.

Sario took her into several different wooden buildings. They stood at wooden barriers Sario told her were called counters. The uniformed men and women standing behind the counters took the jewels Sario carried, listened to his orders, and returned with whatever he requested. Soon the baskets were heavy with plump fruit, wrapped cheeses and meats and a few delicious, sticky candies.

Sario walked toward another store then paused, turning to Marrille. He looked at her arms, taut with the weight of her baskets.

"This should be enough," he said, spinning then weaving through the crowds for the

tower.

Marrille glared. She could take more. He pampered her. And she wanted to look around more. A scaler with featherless wings strode by and she fought her feet to not run after him instead of her guardian.

"Don't pout," Sario said. "Yev got some heavy baskets. Ye have to consider yer weight." He noticed her scowl. "Ye know I didna mean womanly weight, I mean yer flight weight."

She shrugged but scowled on.

"What is it then?"

"What?"

"What's really bothering ye."

"Nothing."

"Smidling, I've known ye since ye came out of yer mam, I know when yer pretending."

She hoped he didn't know half as well as he thought he did. "I want to keep exploring the town."

"Another time perhaps. It'll be a much harder flight home and it'll take longer too. Next time we'll leave earlier so we can waste a little time looking around."

"There won't be a next time." The words were out of her mouth before she could stop them.

"Of course there will."

"No, Mother will marry me off now I've officially come of age, and wives don't go flying, they have children." A shudder rippled through her, ruffling her feathers.

"Oh." Sario halted. "So that's why yeh didna want to grow up." He touched her shoulder. "Are ye still scared of that time yeh watched when yer brother were born."

Scared was too mild a word. He could feel her feathers, uneven, bristling beneath her cloak.

"We've all got something that scares the wimblies outta us." He told her. "I won't lie and say it's not gonna hurt yeh, but yer mother's laboured five times, and she's fine, isn't she?"

Of course he didn't understand. He was male, it was all pleasure for them.

"Try taking to yer mam, she'll tell yeh more. And there's herbs that can ease the pain some."

He walked to the tower again, though slower, giving her time to look around. She didn't enjoy herself as much now she knew she was headed back home.

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*If you have enjoyed this cut scene and haven't read 'Nightfall' yet, grab a copy of the anthology, '18', that it is in on Amazon: <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00K4CNFJW>.*

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