

“Are you sure about this?” Ember Leaf asked Noch as they packed up their bags to go in search of more gryphons to cleanse of corruption. They had already chosen a new pair to go after, ones last reported to be on a middling island some distance away from the settlement they were staying in.

Noch nodded. They had given this a lot of thought, and had decided they wanted to try it out. Since the discovery of her magic, she had acquired a mentor in this strange land of floating islands, and had been practicing in a controlled environment. Now, though, they wanted to see if they could actually practice their newly trained mentalist magic in an environment that wasn't so ideal as a training session. Aine was coming along too, just in case they needed any help.

Ember Leaf had to admit that the way the request had been presented was much more reasonable than Aine's more risky one had been. Noch knew they had magic, they just wanted to see if they could work it outside of ideal conditions. Still, though...

“You better be ready in case something goes wrong,” Ember Leaf warned, and Noch nodded agreeably.

“Always,” Aine snorted dryly.

Ember Leaf considered and then nodded, agreeing to the proposition. Noch would only try it if one of the gryphons seemed hostile, which meant that things were going downhill anyways, and at that point, anything could help. Worst case scenario, the two Emyrians could try and tackle the gryphons given their size, they figured. They checked on Mara in the usual satchel, and the cat was purring like a small avalanche, comfortable and secure. With the bags checked and the plan agreed to, the three set off into the bright blue sky between the floating isles.

The sky above was crystal clear, with the scattered clouds present after a storm. It had rained last night, and through the weather system had moved on, it had left its mark on the clouds and the scent of the air. The clouds had been raggedly strewn in disarray, and the air smelled like rain. Water shone on the isles below, puddles peeking through the trees and moisture catching the light and glinting off of the leaves.

It was a strange, yet peaceful sight, Ember Leaf mused as they soared through the air to their destination with the two Emyrians by their side, noting the other inhabitants of the isles traveling around.

The flight was calm and uneventful other than the pretty scenery, and a few hours later, they landed on their destination to catch a quick break before looking for the gryphons. Thankfully, they were not attacked this time as they rested and recuperated from the long flight. It was a rocky isle, with small streams weaving through the stones, and a few very stubborn trees here and there.

After their break, they took to the air again, searching out the people they were looking for. They found them soon enough - one of them seemed to be throwing up quite a fuss. Noch winced at the scene they came across, and Aine made a disquieted humming noise. While one of the gryphons, a tan and white-spattered one with antlered horns, was standing off to one side, eyes and posture vacant, the other was in some distress.

It looked like it had been trapped by the storm last night - a tree had fallen on it, trapping it between the trunk and a crevice in a rock, and it was struggling mindlessly, unable to think clearly enough to free itself of its predicament. And Noch didn't fancy getting close enough to it to help, what with those razor sharp claws gleaming as it struggled... it didn't seem to know friend from foe, and they rather liked not being injured.

"Ouch," commented Aine unhelpfully, and Noch gave him a look.

Noch landed as close to them as they felt was safe and considered.

"I can try and use my magic to calm them," they told the others, while Ember Leaf was doing their best to convince Mara that she should not, in fact, leap out of the satchel and lay on the sun-warmed stone. "...but I don't know how that will go, so we should probably try and help the other one, first."

"Sounds smart," Aine agreed.

Noch winced as the desperate calls of the trapped gryphon grated on their ears, but Ember Leaf agreed, giving up on keeping Mara contained and letting the cat curl up on a nearby rock for a nap.

The pair headed over to the tan and white gryphon, and Noch watched while Ember Leaf carefully poured the potion into its beak, hoping it wouldn't react. It swallowed it mindlessly, and the only reaction they got was a prodigious sneeze once Ember Leaf had emptied the last of the contents into its beak. The corruption began to fade from its feathers, and both Noch and Ember Leaf sighed in relief before moving on to contemplate the trapped gryphon.

The tree had fallen on them just right to trap them in the crevice - that same crevice, though, seemed to have kept them from being seriously injured, trapping them in the dip rather than crushing them. It didn't look like an easy tree to lift, but... with Aine along, maybe they could lift it enough to get it free.

But it would take calming the gryphon down, which was on Noch, now.

"You think you can lift that?" they asked Aine, who tilted his head at the tree and moved as close as was safe.

"If I wedge myself here... yeah, I think so."

And then there was no delaying it any longer.

Taking a deep breath against the sudden anxiety that rose in her chest, Noch tried to center herself, thinking. Calming themselves so that any anxieties they felt didn't bleed out into the teal gryphon struggling desperately, they reached out with their mind to them, trying to radiate peace and calm.

What met them was *noise*, and they flinched back temporarily. It was... far more chaotic than anything they'd had to deal with before. Panic, pain, and the corruption muddled and made the thoughts of the person confusing and different than the animals and willing people they'd practiced on.

Steadying themselves, they reached out and tried to soothe the gryphon's mind. It was slow going, as the muddled thoughts made it even more difficult than if they were merely panicked. Eventually, though, they managed to convince the gryphon that things would be alright, that they were okay, and they opened their eyes to see them standing calmly, mouth half-open in a forgotten cry.

Noch nodded at Aine, keeping their attention fixed on calming the gryphon, and he moved closer to wedge himself under the tree and *lift*. It was accompanied by a lot of quiet swearing, but Noch didn't pay attention and wasted no time on gently encouraging the gryphon to come out, murmuring calming thoughts into its mind.

It stepped slowly out of the crevice and out from under the tree, and Aine let the tree go with a sigh of relief in the background.

Before Noch was forced to release the gryphon from their calming influence - this was taking a toll on them, limbs shaking with effort and exhaustion from the exertion of the magic - Ember Leaf hurried forward and tipped the cleansing potion between the gryphon's jaws. It swallowed thoughtlessly, and Noch let its mind go with a sigh of relief as its mind began to clear.

It had been exhausting, but... Noch had proved they could *do this*.