

25: Perpetuity

@InMyLeyLines

Tags: Warrior of Light & Estinien Varlineau, G'raha Tia/Warrior of Light, Zhai'a Nelhah/Warrior of Light, post-Endwalker, recovery, healing, developing relationships, polyamorous character, the Warrior of Light is terrible at being a patient

Based on [a gpose set](#) I did last year.

"They are never going to let me out of here, are they."

B'alith flopped back against the pillows of his infirmary bed with a frustrated huff. His still-healing ribs twinged in protest, which he stubbornly gritted his teeth and ignored.

"I'm going to be stuck here in this damnable room for the rest of my life," he said to the ceiling. "I'm never going to sleep in my own bed, or read anything more stimulating than basic primers, or eat any food that has any actual flavor in it ever again."

From a table on the other side of the room, Estinien continued to focus on the handwork he'd been occupying himself with while he waited for the outburst of frustration from the convalescing Miqo'te he was supervising to die down.

B'alith was making slow but steady progress towards recovering, the healers and surgeons looking after him had said, but he was still frail enough that he could not yet be left alone for long stretches of time. His broken shoulder had healed enough that it was no longer immobilized in a sling, and he sometimes had days where he was awake more than he was asleep. He was mostly able to dress himself now if he stuck to simple, loose clothing that he didn't need to pull over his head, but he still needed a lot of help with tasks like bathing, and he was prone to bouts of vertigo that left him disoriented and unable to walk in a straight line. The Scions had been taking turns keeping an eye on him since they'd made their return to

Etheiryrs, and though he generally enjoyed their company, he was rapidly becoming tired of the way everyone kept looking at him like they expected him to collapse again.

To his eternal relief, Estinien was one of the few who did not. He was more than content to sit in companionable silence, reading or working on some kind of fiddly-looking handcraft that B'alith did not recognize, and seemed generally fine with simply existing in the same space together. The sheer *normalcy* of the act was a breath of fresh air compared to the constant hovering of the others.

Estinien glanced back up at his charge when it seemed like the latest outburst of petulance had exhausted itself.

"Are you done?" he asked, his tone the same level of no-nonsense steadiness that it always was.

B'alith's ears dropped slightly. He knew how childish he was being, but he only had so many ways of dealing with the feeling of not being in control when the usual methods were currently unavailable to him.

"They *will* let you out eventually, you know," Estinien said. "Fury only knows how many times I've had my own brushes with the aetherial sea, and they keep letting me loose again eventually."

"That's because you keep escaping out of an open window when nobody's looking," B'alith said, still a little irritable.

One corner of Estinien's mouth twitched into a conspiratorial smile. "Window's open now," he said as he turned his head back to his craft. "And I'm not looking."

"Estinien, even when I'm at the peak of health I've never been capable of the sorts of feats that dragoons are trained for." B'alith paused to watch his companion work for a few moments before curiosity finally overcame him. "What *are* you working on, by the way?"

"Fishing lures."

"You know how to fish?"

"You don't?"

"Never had much cause to learn, what with growing up in the middle of a desert."

"I'll have to teach you some time, then." Estinien looked back up from his work.

"When they finally let you out of here."

He put down the lure he'd just finished making and stretched his arms and neck. B'alith had an uncharitable moment of seething envy over the fact that the dragoon was able to lift both arms higher than approximately mid-chest.

Estinien got up from the table and made for the exit. He looked back over his shoulder at B'alith for a long moment before slipping out, leaving the door wide open behind him.



The walk from the infirmary down to Scholar's Harbor took a lot longer than B'alith had estimated.

It was more or less downhill all the way down to the water, he'd thought. Surely he'd be able to just... sort of let his momentum carry him down once he'd managed to get free of the infirmary.

He had not thought to account for the sheer number of bloody *stairs* between here and there.

There were also a staggering number of people who not only recognized him, but wanted to stop and congratulate him on his heroic feat and his even more heroic recovery from the injuries that had nearly killed him not even an entire moon ago. By the time he reached the plaza surrounding the Last Stand, B'alith was quite a bit more worn and out of breath than he really wanted to admit. He collapsed gratefully onto an empty bench and tried not to think too hard about the fact that, eventually, he was going to have to go all the way back *up*.

Still, though, he'd made it. It was a beautiful sunny day by the local standards, and he welcomed the feeling of Azeyma's warmth against skin that had only seen lamplight for far too long. The sea breeze ruffled his hair, whipping the auburn strands across his face and making him realize it had gotten long enough that he'd need to start tying it back soon.

The sensation of cool air made him shiver, to his momentary confusion—he couldn't remember the last time he'd actually felt *cold*. He had lost a lot of weight during his convalescence, and whatever damage had been done by the aetheric imbalance he'd suffered seemed to have wiped out the ability to ignore temperature changes that he'd previously enjoyed. He drew the heavy shawl he'd wrapped about himself more tightly around his shoulders and leaned his head back against the bench. His eyes slid closed and he gave himself over to the experience of the scents and the sounds around him that were a welcome distraction from the sterile medicinal quality that his infirmary prison had.

One ear flicked in response to two sets of footsteps that he knew entirely too well approaching from his left. B'alith suppressed a grimace, his tail curling around his legs the way it had since he was young and he knew he was about to get in trouble for something, and he stubbornly kept his eyes closed.

"B'alith." A familiar voice cut across his hearing. "How did you get down here by yourself?"

He reluctantly cracked an eye open to glance up at the pair of Migo'te who'd come to collect him. G'raha and Zhai'a stood in front of him, ears flat with annoyance and matched expressions of displeasure on their faces, and B'alith had a long moment of trying to reconcile the fact that both of them were in the same place.

Zhai'a was *here*. He was in Old Sharlayan, thoroughly embedded into a piece of B'alith's life that he'd never expected the Hearer to be a part of, acknowledging that they not only knew each other, but actively *cared* about each other, and he wasn't entirely sure how he felt about that yet. He and G'raha had tentatively reconciled before the Scions had boarded the *Ragnarok* and set off for Ultima Thule—to have yet another complicated relationship finally resolve itself into a declaration of how

they really felt upon B'alith finally waking from the fever that had left him drifting in and out of consciousness for nearly a week had been entirely unexpected.

He looked more fully at both of the men waiting for an answer from him and offered them both a sardonic grin that he didn't entirely feel yet. "How do you think I got here? I walked."

"How did you get out of the infirmary without anyone noticing you?"

"I refuse to implicate my co-conspirator in the matter."

G'raha made an exasperated noise and pinched the bridge of his nose. "Estinien's not allowed to keep an eye on you by himself any more."

B'alith's ears flattened to match the pair of disgruntled Miqo'te in front of him. "G'raha, I'm *fine*."

"You most certainly are *not*," Zhai'a added, his tail flicking irritably as if to emphasize the point. "And I say that as one of the healers charged with your care, not merely as your—" He cut himself off, color rising across his cheeks as the realization of the fact that he and B'alith hadn't yet discussed what they were to each other now seemed to hit him.

"Alright, maybe not *fine* fine," B'alith said. "But surely well enough that gentle exercise and fresh air would do more good than harm now?"

Both men made thoughtful expressions at him that suggested they were not entirely convinced.

"Could we perhaps compromise somewhat? I won't go any further than, say, the Studium?"

"*And* you take someone with you," Zhai'a said. "Just in case."

B'alith gritted his teeth against the second petulant outburst of the day that threatened to spill out of his mouth. G'raha and Zhai'a, to say nothing of the other Scions who'd been helping with his recovery, were only trying to do what they

thought was best. They cared, they were willing to show they cared, and by the Twelve he needed to actually *let* them for once.

"Fine," he said, only a little sullenly. "But can I at least sit here and enjoy the sunshine a little while longer before you haul me back to the infirmary?"

G'raha and Zhai'a looked at each other again. Something unspoken seemed to pass between them that made B'alith a little nervous before they both settled onto the bench on either side of him.

"Another half a bell at the absolute most," Zhai'a said.

"And if you fall asleep on us," G'raha added, "we're carrying you back."