

SPEAKING TO SPIRITS

The king of the Udakii stared blankly out the window of his Palace, overlooking his kingdom despite his disability. He could hear the tortured screams and howls of an Udakii ringing out all through the cavern, followed by his loyal protector's typical eulogies. Even though he couldn't see, he enjoyed listening to the idle chatter of his subjects, and the occasional wails and cries of an Udakii being made an example of.

"You know you don't have to stand at the window every time Tuh'adek puts on one of his 'performances', Vakth," spoke a ghostly voice over the king's shoulder, "what is even the point, brother?"

Just behind king Vakth, a spectral apparition began to fade into view, hovering carelessly over his shoulder. The sickly white, transparent spirit of an Udakii was standing beside the king, adorned in royal jewelry and clothes and looking down at the mad tyrant he called a brother.

"Yes there is, very much a point, Vaa'kyraa" Vakth said, voice raspy and incoherent, "I haven't decided what is and isn't the point yet, but there is one, a point there very much is."

"That didn't answer my question, Vakth." Vaa said, rubbing the bridge of his beak, clearly exasperated to be dealing with the Mad King for such a long time.

"Tuh'adek is the only Udakii that knew who I was, brother." Vakth said, tapping the windowsill rhythmically and shifting his forelegs. "Not even I knew what I am right now, but now I know who I was, and who I am, and will be. I am..."

Vakth trailed off, swaying his hand around his head.

"An idiot?" Vaa whispered, leaning against the wall beside the window.

"POINTLESS!" Vakth screamed into Vaa's face, his ghostly expression unphased. "What is EVEN the point? What IS the point! The point is pointless, but that's the point! You understand me, you bastard!?"

"No please, elaborate." Vaa said, deadpan.

Vakth tried to prod at his brother's chest with a boner finger, only for his hand to phase right through his spirit.

"There is no point to suffering, brother." Vakth said, staring angrily into the eyes of Vaa, "but that doesn't make suffering pointless, I and you both know this to be true!"

The two of them stared at each other longer than they should have, both staring into each of their glassy, foggy eyes. Vakth turned back to face out the window, staring down as the sounds of

whips and screams echoed down below.

“There is no point to suffering, but that doesn’t make it pointless, you say?” Vaa said, giggling to himself. “How profound, you should put that one in your biography. What a page turner that garbled a mess of words that might be, wouldn’t you agree, brother?”

Vaa looked over at Vakth, and saw his eyes were fixed outside, wide and unblinking, a look of emotionless fear glazed over his face.

“Brother?” Vaa asked, inspecting his expression closely. “You seem more off than usual.”

Vaa, out of curiosity, followed his brothers gaze down to the Plaza of the lower section, where the crowd gathered around the stage to witness Tuh’adeks heinous treatment of a poor, helpless Udakii. Amidst the crowd, staring back up at them was a very familiar looking Udakii. Vaa had never seen the boy before, but he somehow knew that they were connected. His flowing blue hair, the black and blue spotted body, his silver jewelry adorned with emerald gems. The Udakii was a perfect visage of Vakth, if not a perfect visage of Vaa as well, if his spectral image beared such vibrant colors. Vaa knew Vakth could feel the same connection, there was no doubt in his mind that the Mad King could see the Udakii staring back at him.

“There’s a ghost down there.” Vakth said, pointing down into the crowd, “I see him, there.”

“I’m not sure what you’re talking about brother.” Vaa said consolingly, “the only spirit you can see is me, remember?”

Vaa knew what Vakth was trying to say. There was always a spiritual connection between the royal families of the Udakii, they could feel each other's grief, understand their pain, and most of all know each other's presence. Vakth had forced a number of women into his bedchambers, much to Vaas displeasure, so there was not much reasonable doubt that one of Vakths forced suitors could have had a peacub, but it would be incredibly unwise to point this out to his brother. Vakth, as his brother knew, was very susceptible to anxiety and existential worry. If Vakth knew he had an heir to his throne, an heir that would someday dethrone him and take the city as their own, there was no telling what mad, twisted, and evil thing he would subject the Udakii people to.

“I don’t believe it's anything to worry about, Vakth.” Vakth said, turning to Vakth, only to find him gone. “Vakth?”

Vaa looked around, confused. He looked down the east hallway, only to see Vakth galloping full sprint down the hall. Vaa rubbed the bridge of his nose again, watching the Mad King barely crashing into walls as he ran full speed.

“Gods I hope he kills himself someday.” Vaa said, floating after the king.

Vakth was muttering to himself, panting and wheezing in a panicked haze as he rushed down the halls, pushing aside patrolling guards and slamming into walls as he rounded the corners of the hall. He didn’t know where he was running to, but he knew he needed to get there as fast as he could.

“Where in Maana Luuls name are you running to?” Vaa said, floating daintily beside him as Vakth crashed into gilded candelabras, tripping over rugs and tearing banners on the wall as he ran past. It was like he was running in circles, darting into and out of every hallway he ran past, only to run back through them again.

“Where where, where is the thing, the thing” Vakth muttered spastically to himself, “it is around here somewhere, I know!”

Vakth was panicking. Whatever he thought he saw outside in that crowd filled his mind with so much dread and fear that his body acted outside his already slim reasoning. He didn’t know what he wanted, or where it was, but all he knew he needed to find it, and very quickly.

Vakth stopped in the middle of a hall, standing completely still and shaking incredibly violently, nearing hyperventilating as he tried to figure out where he was going.

“If you’re looking for your bedroom,” Vaa said, “it’s to the left of you-”

Before Vaa could finish his sentence, the king bolted to the left, bursting through the doors of his bedroom, and slamming it behind him. From the outside of Vakth’s room, he could hear breaking and clattering of glass and metal. He could hear furniture being tossed around and upended, causing Vaa to run at his temples. If he was able to get a headache, Vakth would no doubt cause Vaa many migraines. He sighed and phased through the door of Vakth’s room, only to find the entire room completely trashed, with Vakth ripping into blankets and pillows on the floor. Vaa couldn’t help but giggle.

“Did you find it yet?” Vaa asked, enjoying his brother’s senseless destruction of his room. But his smile soon faded when Vakth held up in a clenched fist what he was looking for; a decorative brassiere. A brassiere that Vaa explicitly remembers being forcibly stripped of a Female Udakiis body that shared the same appearance as the Udakii in the crowd. Vakth gripped the brassiere tightly in both his fists.

“This was it, I remember it.” Vakth stammered, pulling at the cloth and scratching at the silver jewels. “This is what I saw...”

“You saw... a bra?” Vaa said, trying his best to beat around the bush.

“The shape of that ghost’s body was just like hers. But it couldn’t have been her, she’s here, not out there!”

Vaa winced down at the babbling Vakth, who brought the brassiere to his nose and inhaled deeply, letting out a sigh into the air. His spastic shaking subsided, as his voice grew calm and steady.

“It has to be...” Vakth whispered, trailing a finger down his beak, as if tracing his own outline. “No it couldn’t have been... but it has to be...”

Without a word of warning, Vakth’s head snapped towards Vaa, sending a chill through his ghostly form.

“You know... don't you?” Vakth said standing to his feet. “I bet you do, do you?”

“I'm... not sure what you're asking, brother.” Vaa said, trying to suppress his worry as Vakth approached.

“I've already asked!” Vakth snapped, “and you know I know YOU know!”

“I... Don't?” Vaa said, “I'm very confused.”

Vakth growled and walked through Vaa without another word, leaving his room and marching down the hallway. With the brassiere clenched firmly in his hand, and Vaa anxiously floating behind, Vakth knew what he was looking for.

“Good morning my lord!” spoke a familiar, sickly sweet voice of Tuh'adek in front of him, “I do hope you enjoyed our display, your high-”

“Do you remember her!?” Vakth said, grabbing the shoulder and flailing the bra in his face. At first, Tuh'adek didn't understand what he was talking about until he looked at the brassiere, and then a smile crept across his beak.

“Ah yes, I remember that woman dearly” Tuh'adek said fondly, “her soft curves, those supple breasts, and those wonderful blue speckles that dotted her black skin.”

Tuh'adek sighed happily before a look of realization came over his face, remembering what he saw when Vakth was standing at the windowsill.

“Why do you bring this up, your majesty?” Tuh'adek continued, “did you perhaps see something within that crowd?”

“Nononono that's incredibly impossible,” Vakth said, “you know I can't see a thing beside my brother.”

“I would kill both of you if I was able to.” Vaa chimed in as Vakth continued.

“But I did see something!” Vakth said, “In the center of that crowd I could see something that was like my brother yet, not my brother. It looked... it felt... familiar.”

“Familiar, you say?” Tuh'adek said, “and this spurred on a memory of a woman you've fucked? How interesting... you know what this could mean, yes?”

“It means nothing!” Vaa said, trying to intervene, “it means nothing you crazy bastard, don't listen to him!”

“Very interesting, yes it is.” Vakth muttered with a smile, “I know exactly what this means.”

“No you do not,” Vaa said, still being ignored.

“I'll let our guards know there could be a certain... heir to the throne within the city.”

“Gods, damn it.” swore Vaa under his breath, as the two of them parted ways down the halls of the palace. Vaa tried to think of something, something to warn that Udakii boy of what a threat the king posed to him, he needed to think, as every moment not taking action, the heir to throne was in danger.

Vaa followed Vakth through the hall, where he eventually came to the throne room, where several guards were posted in line, with few Udakii ladies tending to the floors and brandishing fruits on trays. The throne room was the most lavish room within the palace, only rivaled by the Crystal Throne itself. Caretakers, housekeepers, and servants meandered around the grand hall, tending to the floors and pictures while the servants catered to the guards and the few rich Udakii that wandered within the throne room. Vakth walked to the throne and sat comfortably on the cold seat, tucking his forelegs under his body. He snapped his fingers as a Young Udakii servant quickly rushed to his side, a silver platter of assorted fruits lifted to his side.

“It’s to your left, Vakth” Vaa said, floating just beside him as Vakth reached for a fruit, biting into it messily, letting its juices pour down his chest and beak.

“Maybe I would be a good father, wouldn’t you think?” Vakth said, looking up at vaa with a untidy smile. Vaa didn’t want to answer, as he knew Vakth would be anything but a good father. Vakth smiled and gently tossed the half bitten fruit to his brother, which passed right through him and splattered across the nice clean floor. Vaa turned to look at the fruit, its juices pooling onto the floor as an Udakii Woman quickly knelt down to clean up the mess, a look of exhaustion in her eyes as she looked up at the guards, who were keeping close eye on her. He knew that the Udakii royalty had fallen far from grace, but there was nothing he could do to save his people from such vile, tyrannical rule. But As Vaa looked around the room, watching the servants and caretakers work themselves to exhaustion under the watchful eye of the guards, there was nothing worse to witness. Almost nothing worse.

“My king.” said a voice from around the corner, as Male Opalian elf came from around the corner, dressed in royal servants garbs as he approached the king.

The Opalian elves were the servants of the Udakii people, standing no taller than 6 feet tall on the average, much smaller as the Udakii stood on average of 14 feet or higher. The Opalian Elves always bore pale blonde hair, with beautiful, iridescent skin that resembled the surface of an Opal crystal, thus the name. The Opalians that wondered about the palace were no more than servants, having no higher status and serving no other purpose than to cater to the guests and royalty within the Palace. But apart from this, but apart from this, the Opalian Elves were treated with more respect than one would think, being spoken to almost as equals, but still being kept under the watchful eyes of Tuh’adeks sadistic guardsmen. If given a reason, the guards would treat the Opalian Elves as harshly as Tuh’adek was cruel.

“Who speaks.” spoke Vakth, looking down in the direction of the voice.

“Du’maah, an Opalian servant, my king.” The Opalian elf said, looking up at the king with a visible look of scorn. Vaa knew whatever was going to come out of this elves mouth, he was going to regret it.

“Shouldn’t you be working, elf?” Vakth said, verbally and physically speaking down to him.

“That is precisely what I wanted to speak to you about, Vakth’bythnul.” Du’maah said, “I believe that you’ve been working the elves too hard and too long, we barely have time to take care of our own needs, let alone one anothers.”

The way Du’maah spoke to Vakth was in a way that Vaa knew would make him uncomfortable, as Vakth began to sweat, becoming visibly nervous as Du’maah continued.

“We barely get food, we barely get water, and the way the guards look at us is revolting. Like they’re sizing us up!”

Vakth scooted back in his throne, trying to distance himself from the Elf.

“It’s not fair the way you treat us!” Du’maah continued, slowly becoming more and more passionate. “If we could leave this city we would, because you and all the rest of your guards are utter tyrants! I would be ashamed if I even shared your race, you blind buffoon!”

It wasn’t until Du’maah saw the look of panic written across the face of Vakth, and the circle of guards that soon surrounded the elf did he change his tone.

“This is...uh...” Du’maah said, looking visibly agitated, “we just need a break or two, my king. I beg of you.”

“You’re going to be needing to beg for far more than just a break, my little friend” Tuh’adek said, pushing aside the circle of guards and looming over Du’maah.

“W-wait, you can’t-” Du’maah began, before Tuh’adeks foreleg pushed the elf down to the floor, pinning under his large talon.

“Oh I can and most certainly will, elf.” Tuh’adek said, pushing harder against the elf and grinding him against the stone floor. “It’s quite rude to speak to your king like that, especially on his throne. What say you, King Vakth? What should be done to this little elf?”

Vaa turned to Vakth, expecting the worst.

“I-I want...” Vakth began, his quivering voice changing to one of rage within an instant. “I want him and every one of these disgusting elves enslaved, every single last one in the city should be bound in chains and kept under lock and key!”

Hearing this was much to Du’maahs dismay and horror, trying to free himself from under Tuh’adeks talon, only to be pressed further into the ground.

“Quite a decree, my king.” Tuh’adek said, smiling down at Du’maah, “perhaps we could have them all stripped naked and bound in chains and shackles for the rest of their days. Have the males forced down beneath the city into the crystal mines, while the females stay here to ‘service’ us.”

“But my sister! Ji’anna!” Du’maah tried to say, before being interrupted by Tuh’adek.

“Will service the king personally. We will take extra special care for her. And as for you, my loose lipped elf.”

Tuh'adek knelt down closer to Du'maah and held up his fingers, and gently began to drag them both down his face, pressing his nails down against his eyes as he screamed in pain, thrashing and convulsing beneath his talon. When Tuh'adek lifted his fingers, the elf's face was covered in blood, as two perfectly vertical scars ran across his eyes.

"No you are the blind buffoon." Tuh'adek giggled, looking up to one of the guards, "go around the city and collect every elf within every home, strip them naked and bring the females into the palace, and take the males to the courtyard. I have a bit of an example to make of this one."

The guards nodded and marched out the palace, informing every other guard on the way to their new task. Vaa just looked on in pity at the now blinded Opalian elf, still whimpering in pain.

"Well..." Vaa said, "this isn't going to pan out well."