

Chapter 73

Tibs sighed.

This was what hurrying caused.

He should stay here, lying on the earth, where it was comfortable, but he had things to do.

He sat, and the house's debris shifted until it slid away. He looked up at the sky and sighed again. He needed to stop rushing.

He stood and walked toward the outside of the house's remains. He pushed beams out of his way as he moved, their mass barely registering.

"Tibs!" Jackal called.

He turned and smiled at his friend and began to greet him.

"No time!" the fighter yelled. "My father's on the run. We need to make sure he leaves the town."

Tibs frowned. That had been the plan, but not what he'd intended to do. He'd changed his mind partway. Yes, Radkliff's death had caused him to rush. Had caused all of this.

"I said no time." Jackal grabbed his arm as he ran by and was nearly thrown off his feet when Tibs didn't move at the pull. He looked at him, eyes wide in surprise. "Abyss, you can do that already?"

"What. Do. You."

"Let of it, Tibs. Now!"

"Mean?" There was running heading in their direction from behind. Corruption and metal. Tibs didn't want to let go of Earth. He'd rush off again and make mistakes.

"Tibs," Jackal pleaded.

Tibs nearly fell from the pain. He leaned on Jackal and wrapped his essence around... all of him. The cut in his side was the worse of the injuries, but there was not one part of him that wasn't bruised.

"That's what someone with real power can do," Don said with pride.

Tibs only nodded. The pain was receding.

"Never doubted you," Jackal replied. "Tibs, can you move? If we don't make sure my father leaves, there's no telling what he's going to cause."

Sebastian.

"How is he going to leave?" Don asked. "There are no attendants at the platform."

Tibs ground his teeth and forced himself to move, even if the pain wasn't all gone. Sebastian had to pay for what he'd done.

"My father has a plan; he always has half a dozen of them." Jackal followed as Tibs picked up speed. "And there's always one escape in them." Jackal caught up and gave Tibs a worried glance. "Don. You did your part admirably well. This is going to get more dangerous. You need to get back to the inn."

"And let you claim you did everything?" the sorcerer said, closer than Tibs expected. "Not a chance."

“We won’t claim it,” Jackal snapped. “Abyss, you’re the only one with Corruption. How would me or Tibs claim to have done that to the house?” they rounded the back of the house, the only part still standing, and Don’s protest was cut short by the dozen thugs waiting for them.

Tibs cursed, then dodged a sword.

No. Sebastian wasn’t getting away.

“I’m taking the roofs!” he yelled and threw himself to the side, then ran, not looking back. Jackal’s call was more anger than worry and Tibs hated himself for abandoning his friend, and Don and Rao, but they could deal with the thugs now that they could use essence. And Tibs told himself he wouldn’t be of any use in the fight since he couldn’t use his without revealing how it changed him.

That was a delaying tactic and nothing more, and Tibs wasn’t playing Sebastian’s game anymore. That man wasn’t escaping after causing Radcliff’s death.

Someone tried to grab his foot as he started up the wall, and Tibs slammed it in their face. From the roof, he saw the mass of people running and ran after them. They had to deal with turns and the Runners. Tibs could run straight for them.

So long as he kept himself from getting distracted.

He threw himself off the edge as hard as he could. He knew he wouldn’t make it and he didn’t care.

He laughed as he fell, enjoying the wind against his face. He threw air below him as he rolled, and as he landed on it, had it explode under his feet, sending him to the other side of the road and the roof.

He landed and pouted.

That should have been more fun. Maybe he should try it again?

No, trying something different would be much more enjoyable. He ran the length, making a plan. Well, figuring out what he’d try. He didn’t know if it would work and discovering that would be just as fun as doing it.

He launched himself in the air and wrapped more around him the way he’d seen Carina do.

He saw the roof approaching and with a chuckled ‘oops’ tucked into a ball just in time to crash on it and roll to his feet, then he run down the incline. He pouted. He’d been certain that would work. He jumped off the roof, made a disk of air to land on, and jump again to reach the other roof.

He’s done that so many times it was actually boring.

He threw himself off that roof.

He got why it hadn’t worked. He was too heavy for air to lift him like that. But that was simple enough to change. He pushed the essence out of his reserve and through him. Showing everything else away and leaving only the wonderfulness that was air.

He laughed as he saw the approaching house through his hand. He marveled that it seemed so thin, barely there, that he could make out the details of the roof tiles.

“Oops.”

He giggled as a gust of wind sent him up. Looking down at the roof he’d almost

crashed into, he saw he still had his armor on, and that it too was translucent, like his body. He laughed at the idea he might have been doing this stark naked.

What would Jackal say if it was Tibs being caught naked this time?

That was easy enough to find out. His armor became more solid, and he wondered at what point it would fall off.

He stopped that, distracted by motion in the distance. Fighting. Wow, they were so far from him. He looked around at the small buildings. No, he was the one who was really far from them, from everything. So far in the sky that he bellowed his laughter and was certain no one heard him.

He should stop going up. He laughed. He really should.

Hmmm. How fast could he go on the way down?

Only one way to find out.

“Shit, shit, shit!” Tibs looked around for anything to grab, but there wouldn’t be until he was closer to the ground, and by then, if he tried, he’d rip an arm off. It was what it had felt like when he’d tried catching himself; early in his roof-running career. Now, with all this time to go faster?

Options.

Earth. He could be hard, but hard enough to survive this? Even stone shattered if they fell from high enough, Carina had told him when he’s asked about a cracked boulder on the side of the mountain in MountainSea. Water, fire, Darkness, Purity, Light, Corruption. None of them would help.

“Abyss.” He only had one choice. He hoped it didn’t get him into a worse predicament.

He laughed as the houses became larger.

This was more fun than he’d thought.

A yell made him look to the side. A small group was breaking away from the fighting, and even at this distance, he recognized Sebastian among them.

Good for him, he thought, then had a moment of distress.

Not him.

Sebastian didn’t deserve to have fun. He’d ruined too many people’s fun for that.

But Tibs was enjoying—

How much more fun would it be to make Sebastian pay?

Tibs smiled. Yes, he could have fun that way. Maybe he could teach Sebastian how fun it was to look at the town from on high, and then watch it get larger very fast.

But Tibs wouldn’t be able to do that if he hit the ground.

Translucent again, wind buffeted him left and right before he had control of them and was falling at an angle to the roofs, toward Sebastian. The man was heading for the platform with a dozen people.

No, that wouldn’t do. Tibs couldn’t teach him to have fun if he got away. Only he couldn’t fall any faster.

Couldn’t he? If the wind could push him to the side and change his angle, why couldn’t it...

He whooped as he moved down even faster, then leveled over the roofs. Hmmm, if he could push himself down faster, couldn't he—

He moved forward faster with a yell of joy. It was so bad no one ever looked up. They couldn't see him doing this.

What was that?

The wind brought him to a stop and held him there.

It happened again. Something flew through him. He turned in time to see a stick vanishing in an arc back to the ground.

Looking around, he found the archer on a roof. He was dressed in black, and even his bow was back. He fired again and Tibs nudged himself out of the way.

How dare he.

"I'm having fun here!" he yelled. "Stop that!"

The man notched another arrow.

"I said—" Tibs smashed his hands before him, sending a wave of air at him. "—stop that!"

The man jumped and was sent tumbling behind a house by the edge of the wave. The bulk of it ripped the roof off the house.

"Oops." Giggling, Tibs looked around to see if anyone had seen him do that. No one was looking up, as usual. Good. Sebastian was still heading to the platform. This had let him get closer, too.

No, no, no. He flew toward him again. Not escaping your coming fun, Sebastian.

Tibs watched the passing roofs and wondered.

He landed and ran along it. He jumped off the edge and kept the wind from helping him. How far could he jump when he was translucent? He watched the roof he'd aimed for pass, and laughed. Further than when he wasn't.

He hit the wall of the house beyond it with a 'omfs' and let himself slide down it with a chuckle. The sound had been more surprised than anything else. The impact had hardly registered.

How high of a fall could he survive like this?

The wind carried him up and over the roofs. He'd go as high as he'd been before, no, even higher and—

Sebastian was a few blocks from the platform.

Right, someone had to learn what fun was really like.

Tibs would fall alongside him and see what happened then.

The wind pushed him down, then over the roofs. He weaved around the chimneys, then up and down and—

How had Sebastian gotten so close to the platform? The man was only running on his legs while Tibs was running on the wind.

That was so unfair.

Sebastian was such a cheater!

The wind pushed Tibs faster. He was going to get right in his face, grab him, and yell

at him for cheating. Cheating ruined the fun!

How was he going to grab Sebastian when the arrow had flown through him? He'd hit the wall, but he didn't know why they'd been different. He was getting closer. A few houses and he'd be on the platform.

Now, how was he going to grab Sebastian?

Well, that was easy.

He let go of Air.

Tibs hit the ground before he could do anything and rolled. His head spun and his body hurt even more, but he forced himself to his feet. The wraps of his essence he'd put in place were gone, turned to air and then released. He ran as he wrapped more around his increased injuries.

It had been stupid to let the element go like that. If he'd been knocked unconscious, Sebastian would have escaped.

He stepped out of the alley and watched in horror as Sebastian ran up the stairs of the platform with a woman next to him. The rest of the people turned to run in Tibs's direction.

Tibs didn't understand what Sebastian thought he was doing. Without an attendant, he couldn't—

The woman looked over her shoulder and Tibs saw her golden eyes.

“No!” Tibs yelled, and summoned fire.

Sebastian turned, grabbing the woman by the arm. He snarled something Tibs didn't hear over the roaring of his anger as he unleashed all the fire he had to stop the man from escaping his vengeance.