

## Chapter 15: The City of Angelus

The clouds drifted aimlessly through the cerulean sky whilst birds flew in flock toward the distant horizon. Below them, a rustling city opened its eyes and yawned at the forthcoming of a new day. Smokes billowed from chimneys while a quiet gale raged through narrow streets and alleyways.

High in the sky, the Ragnarok darted through the air as its wings cut across the white haze. Abel peeked his head over the railing and looked down at the busy metropolis with eyes wide opened in wonder. Citizens and animals scurried like ants on the ground below, appearing nothing more than bugs that seemed to have lost their ways.

Buildings of all shapes and sizes littered the city's landscapes. Some rose only to small heights while others soared marvelously into the air above. Their golden color danced with the penetrating sunlight, creating an aura that encompassed land and sky. Their sparkling glasses glimmered brightly against the cerulean backdrop. Dazzling green trees stood proudly next to spectacular skyscrapers.

Emerald vines and leaves crawled across the sides and rooftops of structures while their flowers bloomed in the midst of winter. Keeping the citizens safe was a stretching tan wall that curved from the eastern edges toward the southern forest borders and to the eastern mountains where it stopped. Soldiers standing on the wall turned their heads toward the sky and waved their hands and arms alike to welcome a familiar skyship.

The Earthling's eyes wandered from the ground beneath toward the southern horizon where he recognized the beautiful forest that had been the beginning of his journey. Smiling at a secret joke, he gazed toward the distant mountains that stood towering over the metropolis. Their white snowy tops reflected the rising sun on the western plain while blurry specs of viridian trees covered the gray base.

He then shifted his eyes from the colossal guardian of the city's eastern border to the white castle that stood atop the mesa, forever watchful of the caramel metropolitan beneath. Twin spires etched toward the heaven on both sides and in between was a brilliantly designed architecture that echoed both the ghosts of the past and the spirit of the future. Although the citadel was too far for the teenager to see clearly, he was still able to make out the vast step-way that led from the front doorway toward the emerald courtyard and to the golden gate beyond.

His eyes meandered to the white waterfall that dwelled behind the ashen stronghold. Born from the destructive nature of falling water, colorless water droplets resided over the edge. When the sunlight struck these free spirits, rainbows appeared that could be seen from as far away as the city wall.

"They call it the city of green and blue," Tyro explained in a tone of admiration. "Plants and creepers surround almost every building. And then you got a river traversing through

the distant mountains and end up on the backyard of the castle, forming a lake that feeds that gigantic waterfall you see streaming into basin below.”

Suddenly, the Ragnarok came to an abrupt halt, causing the Earthling to almost fall over the railing if it had not been for the Captain’s quickness in catching him. The massive vessel slowly began to descend.

After regaining his balance, Abel was able to see the chaotic scene that was the Angelus’ skyways. Skyships of different sizes and shapes raced through the atmosphere, dodging in between buildings and archways that connected the skyscrapers. There were no signs that guided them. Instead, these flying crafts journeyed through the perilous sky, obeying an unspoken law of intercity air travel.

“You better watch your head and arms Abel,” warned Tyro as he pulled the teenager back from the railing, “From the looks of it, I don’t think you know that these trader skyships are very dangerous and reckless. They risk colliding with other vessels in an effort to make extra money. Can’t say I blame them though.”

When the Ragnarok was nearing the ground, the Earthling finally was able to watch the streets below in detail. Horse-drawn carts littered the streets, some traveling on the right side going up while other civilians walked down on the left side. Shadows cast by the colossal high rises still pervaded the city’s foot roads because the sun was still waning over the western horizon. Looking up, the teenager could only shake his head in disbelief at the raw radiance of the rising sunrise striking the golden buildings that made Angelus their home.

“We’re docking at the Angelus port right now,” Tyro clarified briefly before running off. “I gotta get going. They might need my help landing this ship. Don’t go anywhere after we’ve touched down. It’s going to get really crazy!”

Leaving the bewildered adolescent behind, the Captain hurried back to the stairs and up into the cockpit.

“Alright you blubbing Heartrocks,” he shouted in a great voice, “I got my butt chewed off by the port authority the last time we landed, so let’s make this time a little more pleasant okay?”

The crew turned to look at him with a shock face. It was Plian who spoke up for his companions.

“Captain, wasn’t it you who were ordering us to rush things? And wasn’t it you who told us to shoot the anchors before we even had a clearance order? I can’t...”

“Hey!” Tyro interrupted his subordinate, “we are a team! Got it? Alright, moving on!”

“Geez, I can’t believe he’s blaming us for his fault...” moaned one of the newcomers.

“That’s our Captain for ya,” replied another as they returned to their tasks.

“Let’s try and make this landing a little more pleasant than the one in Gloom Forest alright boys?” The Captain said in a jovial tone. “What’s the wind status?”

“We have a slight breeze coming from the eastern quadrant, with crosswind barely noticeable,” answered a fellow Heartrock.

“Great! Shift the sails three degrees port side! Open the port and starboard side nozzle. Decrease engine speed by fifty percent! Rotate the wings’ axial by a quarter. Treat her like a lady men!”

“Altitude, one thousand feet and descending,” spoke one of the men.

“Captain, we have been cleared to land!” Ark commented as he continued gazing at the teenager standing at the ship’s front.

“Altitude, seven hundred feet and descending!”

“Rescind the wings! Aim the anchors!” The Captain shouted as he slowly steered the ship.

“Anchorage locations confirm. Awaiting further orders!”

“Steady. Steady. Fire the anchors!”

“Anchors away!”

The massive ship moaned and groaned as the chains began to rein it in. The floorboards rumbled lightly at the vibration caused by sudden stoppage.

“Anchors secured!”

“Altitude, two hundred feet!”

“Decrease engine speed another forty percent! Fire the third anchor!” Tyro bellowed in a commanding voice.

“Altitude, fifty feet!”

Turning over, the Captain shouted to his messenger, “Prep Eldar for transport to the nearest hospital!”

“Captain!” Replied the courier with a hand signal before he ran away into the lower deck.

“Slowly does it Heartrocks!” The commander ordered.

“We have touchdown!”

With a great tug, the immense skyship landed at its station. The side door quickly slammed open as surgeons hastily carried Eldar through the crowds of pedestrians and marketers and off into the distance.

Abel struggled to regain his balance after falling over when the vessel came to a stop. At first, his eyes were drawn to the dashing doctors and Heartrocks when they carried their comrade away. When the entourage disappeared amidst the bustling port crowd, he shifted his gaze at the commotion that was taking place on the port walk.

Street boys clothed in gray shirts and pants ran from their shops straight toward the Ragnarok. Ordering shouts streamed from inside the massive vessels as the runners delivered supplies to and from the ship. At the highest deck, the Heartrocks finished their duties and began descending the stairs toward the lower chamber where they began new jobs.

Back on the portwalk, legions of Angelians cluttered the street, going about their daily businesses at the dock. They covered themselves in warm winter clothing. Couriers dashed through the busy streets with their wares while merchants stood by their shop, advertising fresh fruits and fashion accessories.

Armed soldiers patrolled the surrounding areas, keeping the peace and resolving daily conflicts that arose every morning. Teamsters traversed the street on horses, dragging behind them daily deliveries from landed ships as well as items from other districts in the city. All the while, sounds of music echoed throughout the air from unknown locations.

Abel stood at the aft, his eyes mesmerized at the commotions that was happening on the avenues below. It was only when a rough but gentle hand grabbed his shoulder did he break from his hypnosis.

“I have allowed the men to go on a short leave,” Tyro said, standing next to the teenager. “It’s been a while since some of them have seen their families here in Angelus. And we did have a rough trip getting here, so I thought it’ll be best to give them some time to have a little fun.”

The Earthling nodded, and then turned his head back to the city below. “Is it always this busy?” He asked curiously.

The Nirvan turned to the youngster and looked at him with surprised eyes, “You’ve never been to Angelus before?!”

Caught off guard by the Captain's question, Abel stammered his words. Attempting to play it off, he threw his hands behind his head and laughed nervously, "Well, yeah, I know. Weird isn't it?"

When he saw Tyro's confused look, he ended up lying, "Actually, it's been a while since I've been here. You see, the last time I was here was when I was just a small child. So I've pretty much forgotten everything about this city. It's almost as though this is my first time seeing it. I'm guessing that's why my questions seem weird to you huh?" He tried to smile it off.

Sensing that there was more to the story, but not wanting to delve any deeper, the Captain nodded and said "Well, I'm guessing you've probably forgotten everything. But still, do you not know what today is?"

When the teenager shook his head in response, the Nirvan chuckled for a bit and began enlightening the youngster. "I guess you must have moved to some really remote place in this world to not know what today is. Well, that's your business I guess. Anyway, today is the Goddess Althura Day. It is the first day in the new year. The Angelus dock is always chaotic with landing and leaving skyships, merchants, deliveryman, and all types of people. But today is especially busy."

"What do people do on the Goddess Althura Day?" Abel asked inquisitively.

"My Goddess," the Captain responded in a shock tone. "Wow, Abel...is there something you want to tell me? I mean, not knowing what the day is fine, but you don't even know what people do on that day? You must possibly be the only person in Nirva that doesn't know. Am I missing something here?"

The Earthling hesitated for a bit. He asked himself if he could trust his new companion. He was growing weary of having to make up excuses for his ignorance. He wondered as to why he was so hesitant to reveal his amnesia. His green and blue eyes twinkled brightly as the sun struck it. His eyes veered off into the distant to see the skyscrapers rising high into the air. It was then he realized he could not hide it any longer. And inside, his own emotion was telling him that he could trust the fellow that was next to him.

He inhaled a big gulp of air, and slowly released his words, "Tyro, there's a reason why I always ask questions about everything."

There was a short pause. Both humans were looking at one another in the eyes.

He continued on, "The reason is that...I have amnesia."

They both stood, looking at one another. The wind rustled across the deck, whistling their hair to and fro. Clamor of curses and insults echoed from the streets below.

“That’s it?” Tyro asked as if that wasn’t what he was expecting.

“What do you mean, ‘that’s it’?” Abel responded as if the Captain’s response wasn’t what he was hoping for.

“My Goddess!” The commander chuckled as he shook his head, “You build up all of this tension just to tell me that?”

The Earthling answered almost apologetically, “Yeah, but what’s so funny?”

Tyro slapped the youngster on the back and began laughing, “Wow, if that’s it, why didn’t you tell me earlier? I thought you were going to tell me something much worse.”

“Is having all of your memories erased from you something to laugh at?” Abel inquired in a hurtful tone.

His laughter trailing away, the Nirvan smiled, “My apology Abel, it’s not that. It’s just, you’re not the only person in the entire world that has amnesia you know? I mean, I get it all the time after a night at the old tavern if you know what I mean,” he winked. “You should have told me this from the very beginning!”

“Well, I didn’t know if I could trust you or not,” the teenager replied.

“That’s true, but I mean, wow! All this time and that’s what you’ve been holding back? So you really don’t remember anything?”

“Yeah. The earliest I can remember is two nights ago when I woke up next to the lake.”

“I see. You’re an amazing character Abel,” Tyro laughed energetically. “You’d managed to survive in the Gloom Forest without any knowledge? The Goddess must really love you then.”

“I couldn’t have done it without the help of two people. I think I’ve told you before right? That’s the reason I wanted to go to Angelus. To meet up with a man called Nezard and his Daagin, Titan.”

At the mention of the names, the Captain stopped laughing and spoke more seriously, “Yeah...well, since we’re on that topic, what are you going to do? We’ve arrived at Angelus, and you’re safe and sound. Any idea on what your next move is?”

The Earthling bent over and leaned on the railing with his arms while the wind played with his hair, “I really don’t know. This city seems so big.” He sighed and then stood upright, “Still, I need to find him. I owe him a Trilian, and he told me he could help me regain my memories.”

“Well,” Tyro began saying, “if you want, why don’t you stick with me for awhile? Just until you know what to do and where to go. I mean, I’m sure you just don’t want to walk off this ship and then go out on your own right? I can even help you find the person you’re looking for too!”

“How are you going to do that?”

“Hey!” The Captain gleamed proudly, “you’re talking to the Captain of the Ragnarok, the leader of the Heartrocks. If there’s anyone that can help you, I’m your man! Information is pretty easy to get. All you need is some money and some connections.”

“And you have both of that?”

The Nirvan laughed and began scratching his head, “Well, connections I do, but as for money? I’m actually in debt, so money wise, that’s gonna be your problem.”

“How am I going to get money if I don’t know anything?” Abel asked sarcastically.

“Hmm,” Tyro said as he began rubbing his lips, “I know! Why don’t we head to the Angelus Tracks?”

When he saw Abel’s blanked stare, he quickly apologized, “Oh! Forgive me! I forgot you have amnesia! Anyway, the Angelus Tracks is right next to the dock. It’s a place where people go to bet on races that takes place throughout the day. Why don’t we go there and hope that you still have your luck?”

“You mean, go gamble?”

“Yeah, I mean, that seems to be the quickest way to make some money. Unless you have another idea?”

“Don’t you need money to bet?” The youngster asked nonchalantly.

“That’s true huh?” The Captain’s voiced trailed off. “I know!” he quickly shouted. “I have a friend who owns a clothing shop near here. Why don’t we go there and ask her to lend us some money? As well as some spare clothing for you too. You know, so that you can fit in more with the crowd.”

The teenager looked down at his own clothing, “what’s wrong with the ones I have on now?”

“Well, one, it stands out too much. Now is not the time to stand out in the crowd. Second, it’s starting to smell,” Tyro commented, hoping he did not hurt the kid’s feeling.

“You don’t have any money to lend to me?”

“Ah, sorry Abel,” the commander laughed jovially, “I have debts that must be repaid. When you get your own skyship, you’ll understand.”

The youngster mocked the Captain by mouthing what he had just said. “What was that?” Tyro inquired curiously as he flashed his half-smile.

“Oh, nothing. I guess there’s not much of a choice for me. Alright. Let’s do it. But umm, what happens if we don’t win any bet?”

The two fighters slowly walked from the Ragnarok’s aft and began descending the stairs, “We? No, no. It’s, what happens if you don’t win any bets. You’re the one borrowing the money. Not I.” The Captain chuckled merrily.

“Great, and I thought we were friends too,” the Earthling responded in a half sarcastic and half joking tone.

When they had arrived at the bottom ramp, Abel suddenly stopped. When asked what was wrong, he replied, “Wait, what about Triger?”

“The Trilian?” The Heartrock leader inquired lazily.

“Yeah. I don’t want to keep it locked up in the Ragnarok.”

“Well, I don’t think it’s a good idea to bring it out into public,” the Nirvan said skeptically.

“Why not?”

“It’s a Trilian. A lot of people are still afraid of it. Plus, I think there’s a law that says you can’t walk around in public with it. I’m afraid there’s nothing you can do about it Abel,” Tyro answered apologetically.

The Earthling slowly sighed and finally gave in, “I guess you’re right. I still feel bad though, to have it all cooped inside here.”

“Don’t worry Abel,” Tyro attempted to comfort his companion, “there are still some Heartrocks left on the ship to take care of the animals. Shall we head out then?”

The teenager nodded and the two fighters continued their departure from the massive flying craft.

The Captain quickly glanced back at his ship and pondered, *‘I trust the ship in your hand Ark. Take care of her for me.’* Afterward, he turned back to his fellow and gave a half-smile, *‘Don’t worry Abel. I don’t think Triger will have to stay in the Ragnarok for long. You will need it pretty soon enough.’*

The two companions cleared the port and were quickly engulfed by the busy street crowd. High above them, skyships continued to land and leave and the sun persisted on basting the city with its brilliant golden rays.

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