

“It’s just a trick of the night, a ghostly apparition, you silly pigeon,” Mn-Da scolded in a loud whisper.

“It is not, I’ve seen it perched above us in the twilight gloom for as long as I can remember,” her avian sibling, K-Lyn, retorted.

“Hush, you’ll wake Shr-Lyn and Dyg-Lss, and you know how cranky Dyg-Lss gets when we wake him up too early.”

“If Dyg-Lss still slumbers, how did this beast for our feed appear in our nest?” K-Lyn inquired, and then she cocked her honey colored head. “And why do we eat these furry creatures, when all the other pigeons eat seeds?”

“As for our feed, you know Shr-Lyn and Joy-Layn have told us many times that we’re not like all the other pigeons. We’re big and ugly while they’re much smaller, prettier and more refined birds, so we simply have to eat more. And Dyg-Lss could have gone hunting during the night you know.”

“I don’t think so, I woke up twice and heard him snoring on both occasions.”

“Well, he *is* one fierce Pigeon, right?” Mn-Da said, and then quickly covered her hooked beak with a wing to muffle a snicker.

K-Lyn swaggered over and swatted her sibling on the head, “Be nice, would ya?”

Mn-Da almost recovered her composure, but then a high-pitched Pigeon squeal erupted from the other side of the large nest, “Would you two pipe down? We’re trying to sleep over here—and a little more beauty sleep wouldn’t hurt either one of you.”

Dawn’s early light had almost reached the forest floor, but before the words of Dyg-Lss even spilled over the edge of the nest, a loud and noble “AAAIIEEEKKKK!” thundered through the fading twilight. “Mind your beak, you simple little bird!”

Mn-Da and K-Lyn scoured the tree above them for the source of the voice, but then the nest shook beneath their talons as Dyg-Lss collapsed in a Pigeon faint. The two young hatchlings looked at each other and quizzically cocked their golden-feathered heads.

“So much for your ghostly apparition—it seems to be real after all,” K-Lyn commented.

“Well, who it is?” Mn-Da asked.

Before her sibling could even think of answering, the air was filled with a deafening rush of wings, and like some Avian thunderstorm, an unkindness of Ravens rained from the heavens and descended on the nest tree of Shr-Lyn and Dyg-Lss, cloaking the thick branches in a tattered robe of inky blackness.

A raspy voice rang out, “The new dawn approaches, and the royal edict states you shall cross the border into Gargatia before each sunrise, Mar-Kay.”

“Royal edict? Mere mouse muck, Ro-Caw, and well you know it!”

“Nonetheless, I will follow my master’s command, and he has decreed that you shall depart Darcatio with each new dawn. Now, be gone before your tardiness forces me and my minions to escort you to the nest of Bu-Daa for a royal inquisition,” Ro-Caw crowed with a dash of Avian shame, and a dollop of Raven arrogance.

Mn-da and K-Lyn strained their ears to hear any additional dialog, but the only sound to reach their young inquisitive ears was a defined *swoosh* of air over royal Eagle wings. Not that they recognized this sound for what it was mind you, but nonetheless their young Avian ears heard the sound, and logged it in their bird brains for future reference.

Dyg-lss finally awoke from his Pigeon faint and Pigeon-bobbed over to them while doing his feeble best to keep a bird's eye on the ebony horde that surrounded the nest.

When the myriad black wings began to simultaneously beat the cool morning air, it was more than his weak Pigeon heart could bear, and he collapsed again in a Pigeon faint.

While Dyg-Lss was indeed a simple minded and weak spirited bird, this was the first time he had fainted twice before the sun even caressed the eastern mountains of Tammak—and to his future chagrin, it would most certainly not be his last time.