

The Thief

Chapter Fifteen

Jakob hadn't intended to rest for such a prolonged period, but it was a necessity. His young mind and body were spent. He surrendered to a deep slumber that carried him through the night and well into the next morning, until he heard a chorus of voices.

“Hey boy?” A lady’s voice spoke softly to him, **“Hey little boy wake up.”**

Jakob thought it was Tita waking him up from a terrible nightmare.

“Oh, he’s a cutie pie.” Another woman’s voice spoke.

“Leave him alone Marisol.” A third women voice came back at her.

“Well, he is. Wake up cutie pie.” A fourth women could be heard as she poked him, and Jakob finally woke up. He opened his eyes and was surrounded by seven attractive women hovering over him.

“Ahhh!” Jakob yelled.

“We aren’t going to hurt you boy trust us.” A younger girl said smiling at Jakob. In a state of panic, he shot up, forcefully pushing the kind-hearted women aside as he sprinted towards the exit. In his haste, he collided with a woman walking together with a man, only regaining his composure upon realizing he was on the second floor. Without hesitation, Jakob raced down the staircase, swiftly passing by a grand fountain positioned at the heart of the building, until he finally burst through the front door. The sun's radiant rays pierced through his vision as he forcefully swung the door open, momentarily blinding him and causing him to stumble and fall face-first. As he rose to his feet, he gently rubbed his eyes, aiding them in readjusting to the surroundings. Glancing behind him, he came to the realization that there was

no one in pursuit. The doors he had hastily exited had closed firmly. Oblivious to his presence, the pedestrians walked past him, their attention diverted elsewhere. It became evident that he did not attract any interest from anyone in the bustling city.

“Move child!”

A man walked past him pushing him out of the way.

“All right I’m okay I’m okay.” He said to himself.

Jakob joined the march of people, blending seamlessly with the crowd that flooded the streets. The city was teeming with individuals of various heights and colors, their voices intermingling in a loudness of unfamiliar accents. Surprisingly, Jakob found relief in the chaos, as if it offered a sense of belonging, he was no one. Perhaps, today held the promise of a brighter future. Jakob pressed on, crossing more streets and faithfully following the footsteps of those ahead. Aware that he needed to head southward to reach the docks, he hoped that his current path would lead him in the right direction. However, the city's layout proved to be a maze. Some turns only led to dead ends, while others unexpectedly led him to people's houses, narrowly avoiding collision at times. Jakobs stomach rumbled louder, and he felt a sharp pain in his side. That last thing he needed was to find a man that Tyranaz barely described, what he really needed was food.

“I’m starving!” He thought about a nice juicy piece of elk.

Jakob seen a cart on three wheels that looked like it was transporting some fruits so he began to follow it hoping that something would fall off. He followed it until the cart went over a bridge.

“Woah!” Jakob continued to be amazed at the city.

Standing on the bridge's edge, he surveyed his surroundings. It appeared that Tyranaz's mention of the aqueduct running through this part of the city was accurate, potentially stretching all the way to the Southern Sea. There was a network of ten or more bridges, seamlessly connecting various sections of the city. Small boats sailed along the water, ferrying goods to and from. After taking a moment to appreciate the bustling scene, he resumed his journey, losing sight of the cart he had been following. However, his path led him to a massive plaza teeming with a multitude of people. The air buzzed with the collective murmur of thousands of voices, while street vendors lined the space, their goods displayed. Amidst the commotion, a grand stone statue of a man stood at the center of the plaza. Clad in a flowing robe, his hair in curls down to his shoulders, with a circular cap atop his head. The chiseled features of the statue showcased a goatee and a medallion dangling from his neck. Though Jakob was unsure of the man's identity, the significant presence was evident, as groups of individuals dressed in identical red and black attire, with their faces fully concealed by red linens, congregated nearby. He speculated that they were members of The Clergy, an organization his uncle had mentioned. The partakers of the plaza seemed to instinctively make way for these people. However, the delight-full smell of food soon distracted Jakob, reminding him of his persistent hunger. He ventured further into the bustling market, where he encountered a vibrant array of fruits he had never seen. Shades of vivid yellow, purple, black, and green. Jakob walked up to the first vender to see what he could get.

“Move along orphan, unless you have Crowns.” The man yelled to him and continued to shout aloud, **“Mangosteen, Kiwanos, Lychee, One Crown for a Lychee, three Wholes for a Kiwano or six Cuts for a Mangosteen.”**

Jakob knew the basic idea of currency. Other than precious jewels, Crowns were the highest form of currency, then came a Whole and the Cuts were the lowest value. It never crossed his

mind of needing currency. He thought quickly and while the man was looking away, he tried to reach to grab a Lychee. The man quickly smacked his hand.

“Boy ill cut your fingers off if you don’t a move on.”

“These people take this too serious.” He thought to himself as he turned to walk away. For the next two days, Jakob dedicated his efforts to the task of survival. It was an absolute realization that he had taken so many basic needs for granted. As he sought shelter, whether it be in the dimly lit corners of dark alleys or beneath the shelter of bridges, he couldn't help but desire for the comfort of Tita's warm meals. Each night, he clung to the hope of awakening from this nightmare, only to be met with the harsh reality of his broken state come morning. With each passing day, his spirit grew wearier, his determination fading. Despite the relentless negative thoughts that persistently plagued him, Jakob mustered every ounce of strength to focus on the present moment. Returning to the plaza each day, he resorted to desperate measures, attempting to steal scraps of food. Gone were the days where he never had to worry about getting his basic needs or contemplating where he would lay his head to rest. In his previous life, everything had been provided for him. Now, he found himself locked in a battle for survival, fighting tooth and nail for every inch of life. The first night brought him face to face with danger as he was abruptly chased out of an alley by vigilant guards, rudely interrupting his restless slumber. The following morning, he came close to securing a Mangosteen, only to be caught in the act just as he was about to savor a bite. The people in the plaza proved to be much less friendly than Jakob had anticipated. He encountered a group of boys involved in a game, kicking a small circular object around. However, they coldly denied him the chance to join in, instead choosing to mock him as he walked away. Under normal circumstances, Jakob might have been tempted to retaliate, but his depleted energy left him unamused. All he could think about was his concerning hunger. As

night fell, heavy rain poured down upon the city. Seeking rest, Jakob sought refuge beneath a bridge, hoping to find a comfortable spot to rest. Unfortunately, his temporary shelter was abruptly invaded by a family of colossal rats. To his astonishment, these rodents were the size of dogs. In his desperate state of hunger, Jakob couldn't help but entertain the thought of capturing one of these rats and eating it as a means of survival. Despite several unsuccessful attempts to take food, luck had not been on Jakob's side.

However, a stroke of fortune finally hit him. Jakob experienced a rare night of undisturbed sleep, rejuvenating his spirits. The following day, he ventured into the plaza, unaware of the unexpected turn of events that awaited him. As he made his way through the bustling square, he noticed a commotion unfolding. To his surprise, the very same vendor who had previously threatened him was now being apprehended by a group of guards. As Councilmen Espina took charge, Jakob swiftly concealed himself from sight. Once the man was escorted away, Jakob seized the opportunity and hurriedly approached the vendor. With a sense of urgency, he snatched the nearest available fruit. The sight of Jakob's impulsive act triggered a frenzy among the surrounding crowd, as others joined in the chaotic pursuit of stolen goods. Managing to escape the chaos, Jakob retraced his steps to the secluded alley where he had spent the previous night. Settling down, he finally savored his first meal in nearly three days. A smile formed on his face as he examined the lychee, a round pink fruit, its enticing aroma filling his senses. Out of nowhere, a sound caught Jakob's attention, causing him to suspect the presence of those pesky rats once again. As he began to rise, intending to make a swift exit, he realized that the noise originated from a small dog scavenging through the trash in the alley. The dog appeared skinny. Its ribs faintly visible beneath its fur. Jakob recognized the breed as a rottweiler, having encountered one before. Gradually, the dog approached him, reminding him of memories of his

former feline friend, Tiberius. Although Jakob's stomach grumbled with hunger, he knew deep down what the right thing was.

“You hungry doggy, come here.” Jakob waved to the dog to come over. The dog came closer and sat down next to him.

“Your all alone to huh.” The dog seemingly looked up to him like he answered and licked his leg.

“Me to. Here have some, it looks like you’re hungry.”

Jakob felt the dog’s pain, to be all alone and starving. It was a nice feeling to finally engage in conversation with another being, so much so that despite his hunger he gave the entire Lychee to the dog. As they both sat there, a shout suddenly pierced the air, grabbing Jakob's attention.

“Where is that coming from?” Jakob guessed to himself, his gaze searching for the origin of the sound.

“Up here!” the voice called out once more.

Looking upward, Jakob spotted a young boy seated on the rooftop's edge, peering down at him.

“If you want some food, come up here!” the boy signaled, waving to Jakob.

Uncertain of whether he could place his trust in this kid, Jakob found himself in a predicament. The small amount of food he had wasn't enough, and he had been dealing with hunger for the past three days. At this point, he had nothing to lose.

“How can I get up there?” Jakob hollered in response to the boy's invitation.

"Over by the corner, you'll find a ladder. Hurry up, I don't got all day," the boy impatiently directed. Jakob rose to his feet and bid farewell to the dog by gently caressing its ear before dashing around the corner to locate the ladder. Jakob ascended the weathered ladder, its bars worn and stained. As he reached the rooftop, there was no sign of the boy he was seeking. His eyes swept across the panorama of rooftops. Suddenly a red sphere hurtled towards Jakob, striking him square in the chest. It was an apple. Startled he fumbled to catch the fruit, only to watch it slip from his grasp and fall to the floor.

"You were supposed to catch it butter fingers." The boy appeared on top of the building directly in front of Jakob.

"Hurry up!" The boy shouted turning walking out of Jakobs sight.

"How do I get up there?" Jakob yelled.

"Use your imagination!" From a distance Jakob heard him yell back.

Jakob grabbed the apple from the floor and dusted it off to save it for later. He noticed to the left there was piping attached to the building that he could use to get some footing to pull himself up. Once Jakob got atop the next roof, he seen the boy just about three buildings ahead standing on the edge looking over the city. Metal walkways attached the buildings together, they looked like they were barely hanging on, so Jakob walked over slowly, taking his first bite of his fruit. His stomach rumbled with anticipation for the food he desperately needed. It was delicious. The sweetness of the apple made his mouth water. It was the best food he had ever had, after nearly starving to death.

"The names GD." The boy said, turning to face Jakob. The boy had a slender frame, with a long nose protruding from his youthful face. A faint hint of a mustache graced his upper

lip. His raven-black hair was meticulously slicked back. As Jakob observed him, he couldn't help but notice the scar that traced a jagged path through the boy's left eyebrow.

“What’s your name?” GD asked as he turned back around to look over the city.

Jakob didn't respond, he didn't know what to say.

“It’s okay, you don’t have to tell me your real name. Everyone goes by street names anyway. My real name isn’t GD, but everyone calls me that.” The boy shrugged his shoulders.

“What does it mean?” Jakob asked.

“It stands for God Damn good looking.” GD laughed. **“My real name is Gabriel.”** Jakob instantly liked the kid. However, he was cautious, he did not understand why this random kid was being nice to him. Everyone he encountered so far in the city was mean.

“You want some jerky?” Gabriel asked.

He took out a thick piece of crispy meat with some flakes on it and handed it to Jakob. The savory and spicy smell made him begin to salivate even more. Jakob quickly grabbed it, putting the fruit away and scarfed the meat down. It was probably old because it was hard to chew but Jakob didn't care, it was tasty.

“Look at this city, such a mess, but so much opportunity. Isn’t city life the best!” Gabriel exclaimed. Jakob finally looked up and realized what the boy was staring at. His initial vantage point offered only a glimpse of the cityscape below. However, as he adjusted his position, a view unfolded before his eyes, revealing the true magnitude of the metropolis. It stretched as far as the eye could see. Extending miles in every direction until it kissed the edge of

the vast ocean. Jakob always wished that his dad would have brought him down here, but now he understood why he never did. Navigating through the maze would prove to be a hard task for the inexperienced. Without a clear sense of direction, one could easily find themselves lost. As his eyes extended towards the outskirts, countless seagulls soared through the air. They formed a cloud that seamlessly melding into the expanse of the ocean. It was the first time Jakob saw the Southern Sea, in the far distance he could see the shapes of boats coming and going. Hopefully, he would get the chance to see a pirate ship. Jakob looked back to the mountains, to where he came from and realized how different the city changed as he moved farther in. When he was first chased by the guards in the upper portions of the city, it was spotless and there were large governmental buildings, but it changed, the buildings grew smaller and more cluttered, the further he looked west. Buildings were falling apart, the streets full of holes, buildings stacked upon rubble.

“Why are you helping me?” Jakob asked while looking around.

“I’ve never seen you around the city, and then two days ago you try to steal fruit from Mr. Sie. That was ballsy, so I’ve been watching you, to see what your made of.”

“Mr. Sie?”

“That bald guy you tried to get food from, he is mean to all the kids. He calls Twelve on us all the time. Good to see they finally arrested him.” Gabriel explained.

“But why me?” Jakob continued to ask.

“Why did you give that food to the dog, even though you hadn’t eaten anything?” Gabriel came back.

Jakob stayed quiet for a moment, **“He was alone like me.”**

He wasn't sure why he felt comfortable talking to this boy but at this point he had nothing to lose.

“And that's exactly why I helped you, the only way to survive in the streets of The Colonies is by working together. It's how you treat the least of us, that's what I always say. I have my own set and I'm always looking for good recruits.” Gabriel finished.

Jakob nodded his head in agreement, inside he was both excited and nervous. His mind started to wander and fantasize of all the fun things they could do. It felt good to have a friend.

“But.” Gabriel continued, **“You have to keep up. You ever heard of free running?”**

“No.” Jakob responded unsure of the name.

Gabriel jumped down to the building in front of him and rolled to his feet.

“It's a way of getting around the city and no one can catch you if you do it right, if you can keep up with me, I'll introduce you to the guys.”

“And what if I can't?”

“Well then I guess you'll just get lost again.”

Gabriel took off running towards the next building, launching out forward over the edge, using his two front arms to propel him forward over a large gap between two buildings. Once he landed, he just kept going, jumping from one object to another, one foot jumping up to a rail and pulling himself up again. Gabriel looked back and smiled at Jakob. In an instant Jakob reflected

on all the times he ran through the palace, through the training grounds and back home. This was perfect for him. Jakob took off running and jumping, catching up to Gabriel quickly.

He was surprised, **“Alright let’s see what you got.”**

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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