

2/15/08

First Flight

I never knew wings could hurt so much. The pain was sharp, like a thousand needles piercing through the muscles and tendons, and yet it felt...alive. Every time I tried to move them, it was as though the feathers themselves were on fire, stretching and tearing under my skin. It felt unnatural, like my body wasn't meant to carry something so...massive.

I tried to lift them, the weight of each wing like two heavy stones tied to my back. My arms trembled as I pushed, straining to move even an inch. The sound of ruffling feathers filled the quiet room, but it was more of a distant hum in my ears, drowned by the pulsing ache that radiated from where the wings sprouted, right between my shoulder blades.

"Focus," a voice whispered in my mind, calm but insistent. It was my mother's voice, one I hadn't heard in years, but it was there, as if she were standing behind me, urging me on. "Breathe. It's part of you now. You've been chosen."

Chosen. I had heard that word my whole life, but it had always felt like a distant, abstract concept — a prophecy, a legacy, a tradition. Now, standing in front of the cracked mirror in the dimly lit attic, the reality of it settled over me like a heavy cloak. My wings weren't just a part of some old story. They were real. And they were mine.

My reflection stared back at me, eyes wide and filled with disbelief. I had always known the day would come, that the wings would appear, but I had never prepared for the torment of it. The wings were large—too large for my frame—spanning out from my back like the spread of a hawk's wings, each feather tipped in silver that shimmered faintly in the half-light. They were beautiful, I could admit that, but they felt so wrong, so out of place.

Another spasm of pain shot through me, making me gasp. I collapsed to the floor, my legs giving out beneath me, and I clutched the floorboards, trying to steady myself. The wings crumpled behind me, folding and unfurling in awkward, jerky movements.

"Steady, child," the voice urged again, but it was fainter this time, like it was far away.

I took a deep breath, trying to steady my shaking body. "I can't do this. It hurts. I don't know how."

The pain was unbearable, but it wasn't just physical. It was the overwhelming sense of *change*, of something irreversible happening to me. My whole life, I had been just like everyone else. But now...I was different. I wasn't sure I wanted to be.

The attic seemed to close in around me, the wooden walls pressing in, almost suffocating. A whisper of wind slipped through the cracked window, rustling the loose papers on the floor. Suddenly, I felt something else. A shift in the air, a presence, like a pull. I lifted my head, blinking through the haze of pain. In the corner of the room stood a figure, bathed in the pale light from the window, shrouded in shadow. It was a man, or at least his shape resembled a man, but something about him was...otherworldly. His skin shimmered faintly, like starlight reflected on water, and his eyes glowed an eerie shade of gold.

"Let them go," he said softly, his voice like the rustling of leaves in the wind.

I frowned, my brow furrowing. "What do you mean? Let them go?"

The man's lips curled into a soft, knowing smile. He took a step forward, and my breath caught in my throat as the air around him seemed to bend, charged with an invisible force.

"You're afraid, aren't you?" His eyes softened as he looked at me, a strange sympathy in them. "But you can't fight what's meant for you. Not anymore."

I shook my head, tears welling in my eyes. "I can't do this. I wasn't *meant* for this. I don't want to be...*chosen*."

He sighed, and there was an almost imperceptible shake of his head. "No one ever does, not at first. But the wings...they're not a curse, though they may feel like one now. They are your strength. They are who you are, whether you accept it or not."

I stared at him, my breath hitching, as the wings twitched behind me, as if they had a life of their own. The pain was unbearable, but beneath it, there was something else, something ancient and deep inside me that seemed to stir in response to his words.

"The wings will heal in time," he continued. "But you must learn to control them. To embrace them. You must learn to fly."

My heart pounded in my chest. The word *fly* echoed through my mind like a distant song. I had never been a bird, never even imagined soaring through the skies. I didn't know how.

The man took another step forward, his presence enveloping the room. "Do not fear what you are becoming, child. You are not alone. You never were."

With a trembling breath, I closed my eyes and let the tears fall freely. This was it. The moment everything changed. The moment I stopped being human and became something more.

And with that, the wings flared out behind me. The pain was still there, but this time, it was different. It was no longer an enemy to fight, but a fire to be embraced.

I could feel them moving now, stretching and folding with my will, the ache slowly becoming a memory.

I opened my eyes.

And for the first time, I felt the wind lift me.