

Reecah's Flight



“Poppa, do you think I’ll ever be able to fly?”

“Of course, little poppet. You can do anything you set your mind to.”

Reecah’s dimples creased her pudgy cheeks, the sunshine twinkling in her eyes. Lying on the side of a steep, grassy hill, she put her hands behind her head and stared skyward. “Do you think I could fly as high as a butterfly?”

Viliyam Draakvriend smiled at his six-year-old granddaughter daydreaming like he was wont to do. She reminded him of her mother—a girl daring to envision a better life. She reminded him of himself.

Viliyam spotted the monarch butterfly Reecah tracked with a pointed finger. “Higher.”

Reecah giggled. She scanned the sky and thrust her arm out. “High as that bird?”

Viliyam spotted the seagull squawking above the steely waves of the Niad Ocean. As long as Lizzy didn’t get wind of their conversation, what was the harm? “Higher.”

“Higher?” Reecah’s high-pitched voice squeaked. “Wow.”

He loved her innocence. Oh, to be a child again, oblivious to the cares of the world—her hazel eyes full of wonder, searching the sky. He felt warm inside. Lying here with Reecah allowed the pressures of everyday life to ease away. It wasn’t often he got to know peace.

It was a rare day in Fishmonger Bay. Viliyam had made sure his chores were completed before the sun crested the lofty heights of the Spine. Days like these only happened a few times a year. There was no way he was going to miss out on his favourite activity—stomping across the mountainside in search of life’s simple treasures with Reecah. She was growing up much too fast.

A warm breeze wafted over the hill, ruffling Reecah’s dark brown hair. She pointed excitedly up the coast to an unusual jut of flat rock. “How about as high as a dragon?”

Viliyam sat up and squinted. “You see a dragon? Where?”

“There Poppa, by the cliffs.”

The joys of getting old, Viliyam mused, his imperfect vision unable to see what Reecah was going on about. He followed her crooked finger. If there was a dragon up there, he couldn’t see it.

“You see it, Poppa?”

“Yes, poppet, a big one.”

Reecah frowned, too smart for her britches. She knew he hadn’t.

Viliyam searched the area with concern. It wouldn't do to be caught unaware on the hillside if a dragon *was* about. "We should go now. Grammy will be worried."

"Aw! It's not even late. Can we go down to the shore? You promised." Reecah crossed her arms, pouting.

Viliyam couldn't help but laugh. The little devil knew how to play him. Her cute scowl did it every time. Lizzy was right to call him a sucker. Reecah pulled his strings and everyone knew it.

He searched the cliffs, hoping he wouldn't regret his weakness. "Last one to the bottom is a slimy serpent!"

Reecah squealed, on her feet in an instant.

Gingerly climbing to his feet, Viliyam winced at the stiffness in his back. His trekking days would soon be over.

Reecah bounded ahead, her little legs barely keeping up with her body as she charged down the hill without a care in the world.



"Grammy! Grammy!"

Reecah's boots clicked across the porch Viliyam had built earlier in the spring; a job Lizzy had been after him to complete for the last several years. There was always something needing fixing around the blasted place.

Reecah burst into the hut, the thin door banging off the interior wall and slamming shut again. "Guess what Poppa said?"

Viliyam groaned, holding the door halfway open, unsure whether he wished to enter or not.

"Gracious, child, what did Poppa tell you?" Viliyam's grey-haired wife turned her chair away from the old loom she worked at and caught Reecah in her embrace, depositing her on an apron-covered lap.

Reecah beamed at Lizzy, her smile cleaving her face from ear to ear. "Poppa said I'll be able to fly one day!"

The happiness slid from Lizzy's wrinkles. She locked eyes with Viliyam; her look promising him they would be having words.

Lizzy gave Reecah a weak smile. "He did, did he?"

"Yes, Grammy. High as a dragon!"

Viliyam stepped into the one-roomed hut, unwilling to meet his wife's brooding glare.

"We've been over this before, my little flower bud. People aren't able to fly."

"That's not what Poppa says. He says I can, long as I really wanna."

"Sometimes Poppa doesn't know what he's talking about."

Reecah gazed into her grandmother's eyes, her pout not nearly as effective.

"People aren't built for flying. We don't have wings."

Reecah's face twisted in thought. Not liking what her grandmother said, she crossed her arms. "Well, Poppa says I can."

Viliyam dared to look across the room. Reecah's pout never worked on Lizzy but it had him melting again.

"Poppa was just being silly." Lizzy glared at Viliyam. "Weren't you, Poppa?"

Viliyam felt like a dog with its tail between its legs. He nodded and said softly, "Yes, poppet. Poppa was joking."

The hurt look he received broke his heart.

Reecah jumped from Lizzy's lap, a loud, "harrumph," escaping her as she stormed over to her blanket in the back corner. She sat facing the wall, clutching a crude wooden dragon he had carved for her mother when she was around the same age.

Lizzy indicated with hard eyes for him to step outside. He swallowed and followed his skinny wife onto the porch.

When the door banged shut, she didn't waste time. "How could you?"

Viliyam didn't bother replying. There was no point when Lizzy got herself worked up. He found it best to let her vent until she worked the frustration out of her system, and then apologize. Even if he didn't think he'd done anything wrong.

"We agreed not to fill her head with this dragon nonsense."

"I know, but—"

"But nothing! You want Reecah to end up like her mother, father, and uncle?"

"No, but—"

"Dammit, Viliyam! She's all we have left of Marimah."

"She's only six, Liz. It's a phase she's going through. She'll have forgotten about it by tomorrow. By then she'll be dreaming of sailing the high seas aboard Jonas' brig."

As soon as he mentioned the grizzled sea captain's name, he regretted it. The anger in Lizzy's eyes was evident in her squint. "I told you never to mention that name around here."

He held his palms up. "Sorry, a poor example." He stepped off the porch and spun to face her. "Come on. You know I didn't mean any harm. If I get home before dark tomorrow, I'll take her back to the hill and explain why she can't fly."

"And then what? Fill her head with more of that fantastical shit? Like you did with Rina and Davi? Look what it did for them!" Her wild green eyes appeared on the verge of tears.

The sting of her words slapped Viliyam hard. There wasn't a day went by that his heart didn't die a little bit more since their children's horrific death. If Lizzy could only feel the hurt her blame instilled in him.

"I'm not about to lose her to your fanciful dreams and promises of adventure." Lizzy glared, heaving heavy breaths. "I'll be damned if Reecah ends up like her mother."

Viliyam flinched as the hut's door slammed open and banged shut, marking Lizzy's passage into their darkening home.

He walked down the path to where it joined the main trail and gazed at the ocean—the waves awash with a gorgeous tinge of orangey-red refracting the setting sun.

It was a rare day in Fishmonger Bay indeed. It'd be good to get back in the boats.

