

**“Hey, Zaz?”**

“Yez, mezzir?”

**“What was the Islamic Golden Age like?”**

“Ah, yez. Ze Perzian zcholarzip of zat age vaz extraordinary vithin itz context, and it haz been fazing to vatch zeir ideaz zpread over ze yearz. Ibn Zena’s treatizez on love introduzed much of vat ze Europeanz zink of love and shivalry. I zink I have a copy of it somevere, zough it may be in Farzi...”

**“No, I mean, what was it like to be there, in that age? Did you meet any of the great polymaths, or anything?”**

“Oh, vell, I vould not know, and no. I vaz not in ze region at zat time.”

**“What? Why not? How could you have not been there?”**

“Ah, I waz ztuck in a hole.”

**“The fuck?”**

“Yez. I vaz viz ze Maya at ze time, on ze veztern continent. Ve vished to explore a cave, and zere vaz a collapze vile ve vere in zere. Zome time in ze... Zikz zentury, perhapz? By ze time I finized clawing my vay out, ze great zity vaz abandoned, it vaz very ztrange. Ze digging waz meditative, zough. Very calming. Ven I svam back to Eurazia, ziz whole great age had come and gone. But, zez zingz happen.”

**“What? You missed out on the greatest era of scholarship in human history, and it's just ‘These things happen?’ Aren’t you mad or anything?”**

“Yez, vell, hmmm. Vat you muzt underztand iz zat, vat you zink iz important now, and vat vill turn out to have been important later, are very different zingz. Zere vere battlez I fought vith comrades and friendz vere I zought ‘Ziz iz a victory for all time,’ zat are long zinze forgotten by everyone bezidez me. Good friendz, zey vere, died vell and viz valor, forgotten now. And zere vere zingz I heard ov, vere I zought ‘Ziz iz nozing,’ vich changed ze courze ov hiztory. Zo, zez zingz happen.”

**“I’d still be pissed, though, to have missed out on all that.”**

“Perhapz you vill underztand ven you are older.”