



Tzipcanu

Bird Festival



E.R. Zaugg



“Gorrinyu llibertat ghanyva tlenva llemakhal zentzu.

The sparrow's freedom and perseverance reminds us to seek a life of simplicity.”

-Sister Aranya “Mother” Jimaiyo

Aranya smiled, closing her eyes and holding the teacup up to inhale its aroma. The tea was papaya, one of her favorites and native to Sceotan, though considered quite rare elsewhere on Innatraea. She took a very slow sip, savoring its flavor while listening to the birds singing around her. She was sitting in the garden atop her home, as she did most mornings. Centuries ago she had changed the entire roof into a flourishing garden of flowers, fruit trees, and other plants. It had taken her decades, because she had also decided to use Weaving and make the garden self-sustaining. She no longer had to water a single plant, trim any leaves or branches, or in fact do anything at all. Except sit there and enjoy her small personal paradise. Aranya took another sip of tea, before placing the cup down and opening her eyes, smiling. The many colorful birds that inhabited her home flitted about everywhere, singing as they did every morning, both greeting the sunrise and her.



She watched them, enjoying the colorful display of flapping wings and sound, while still sipping her tea occasionally. It was almost time for Tzipcanu, their island's bird festival, that occurred every Spring, when the flocks returned to Sceotan. The birds in her garden of course no longer migrated, the garden was kept warm year round, and they had long since figured out life was easier living around her home. Aranya's smile widened as a Gorrinyu, referred to by most Innatraeans as the common sparrow, landed on her small table by the bowl of seeds she always kept there. She'd named this one Kolotzi, a name amongst her people that meant "Brave," because the little bird seemed to never give a whit whether she was nearby or not. He was her favorite, for now anyway, unfortunately the tiny birds did not live long lives.

He finally flew away, taking more food than usual with him. He and his mate Yenu, whose name meant "Pretty" for her unusual coloring, had another host of babies to take care of. Aranya would watch those little birds grow, learn about life, and eventually have their own babies. Keeping track of her birds, naming them, and watching their families over time was a joy. It gave her something to do with her mind, that made her happy, and more importantly had nothing to do with the complexities of Weaver responsibilities or politics.

Aranya finished her last sip of tea and set the cup down, sighing happily. Then she got up and walked over to another nearby table, taking a seat again, and looking at the little potted tree there. Its name was Pilutzi Ghani, which meant "Little Giant," it was the one thing she still tended to herself in the garden, and was nearly her same age. Caring for the tree was a habit she'd picked many centuries ago, during a trip to Imperial Shinoda in her younger years. They called the art form Bonsai, and it was an exercise in diligent patience that she truly loved.



She touched the little tree gently with her fingers, admiring its flowing contours and delicate brightly colored leaves. Aranya laid her other hand on the small pair of shears next to her, thinking. There was no hurry. There had been many days over her long life, where she and Pilutzi Ghani had spent hours together, without her performing a single cut. Patience, and the appreciation of the tree's beauty were an integral part of why she loved the art of Bonsai so much.

Then she smiled, closing her eyes, as the delicate music of Ollin's clavichord gently drifted over the morning air to her ears. The man was an excellent musician and lived in one of her apartments as a pensioner. There were many that lived throughout her large home, mostly those who were older or had nowhere else to go. Tlalli ran her home's kitchens, while Izel kept things organized, and many more attended to other details. Her people had long ago taken to calling her home Nochalu, which really just meant "Home" in their language, but held a more significant meaning. It was a place of love and safety, where people could always go and be a part of a family. She smiled listening to the music, and laughed a little to herself remembering Ollin as a young boy, he had been a handful, and she'd ended up paddling his backside on more than one occasion. He was an old man now, though still very young compared to herself, he had been living under her roof since his wife Zaniya had passed. His beautiful music, that he played every morning, was the man's way of thanking her.

Then she heard quickly approaching footsteps and opened her eyes, looking over just in time to catch Chima with a few Weaves of air; before the young girl fell flat on her face and spilled Aranya's breakfast all over the floor. The child had only been a part of the household for a few years, having moved in after losing both of her parents to a horrific storm.



Aranya smiled, amused. "Child, how many times must I tell you? Walk carefully and get your tasks done in a patient manner. No one expects you to run, or get things done more quickly than even a Weaver could."

Chima nodded, looking chastised. "Yes Mother Jimaiyo."

Aranya smiled. "Alright child, come sit. What did you bring for us?"

Chima smiled joyously. The best way to encourage a young girl's confidence and self worth was to make any chastisements a gentle learning experience, while focusing on the positive things that truly mattered. Aranya's use of the word "us" meant that they would, as usual, be sharing breakfast together while watching the birds. Which also meant that Chima was forgiven. "Your favorite, Chilatlukhu!"

The girl very carefully walked the rest of the way and set the tray down on the table between them, after Aranya moved Pil Ueyi and her shears out of the way. "Kolotzi took more food again this morning, the babies must be doing very well."

Chima sat down, smiling, while patiently waiting for Aranya to take her food first. "Really?! When do you think we will get to see them?"

· · · · ·

Just over a century later...

Taia took another sip of her kahve, a hot and bitter drink from Tursim, which she far preferred over tea; especially when it was strong and thick like the Tursi themselves drank it. Others might add milk, herbs, sugar, or even fruits to soften its taste; which she found a bit ridiculous. Why drink kahve at all if you were going to utterly ruin the flavor?



Then her cup was empty, it always seemed like every inn on Sceotan served kahve in cups that were too small. Sighing, Taia placed the empty cup on its saucer, and looked off of the balcony at the street below. At least from here she should have a good view of the parade, she enjoyed the annual display of brightly colored bird costumery, dances, and singing, just not being amongst the people performing them.

It would still be a few hours until the festivities started, Taia always arrived early to avoid the crowds and find herself a good spot on a nice inn's balcony. This inn's serving girls however left a lot to be desired, she looked at her empty cup and sighed again. Maybe if she ordered more food they would fill up her cup a little faster? Then again she could probably just give them a few more coins and accomplish the same thing, without stuffing her face like Brother Frederick.

A commotion started below, distracting Taia from wishing she had more kahve, and making her look down towards the street again. She smiled, because it was Mother Jimaiyo and her little army of Sceotians. Chima was with them too, a Goddess Bound who was just over a century old now, and though bonded to someone else, always came to help with events like these; the loyalty was admirable. They were walking through the street waving and singing, while throwing out handfuls of candy for the children.

Meanwhile their matriarch herself was specifically going to each of the most destitute appearing people, and personally embracing them, before giving them coins and food. Taia appreciated the woman's effort, but couldn't quite fathom how she was able to hug such dirty Innatraeans, just thinking about doing that made her shudder.

Then again, the woman did have an inherently greater level of respect amongst their island's people than any other Weaver. Everywhere she went people automatically greeted her, gave her food or gifts, asked for advice, offered a helping hand, or moved out of her way.



The woman was a force, and in such an unusual way. She rarely ever left Sceotan, and never volunteered for any position of power amongst the Weavers, yet Innatrea seemed to bend itself to her will. Taia still remembered an incident, nearly two centuries ago now, where they had stood in consensus for raising the local taxes. Out of nowhere Mother Jimaiyo had entered the Great Loom, ignoring all decorum that said she couldn't be there, looked each one of them in the eyes, and simply said "No." Though strange they had all laughed it off, until the next morning. The entire island, down to every last Sceotian, had decided to stop working. Every shop, inn, guard post, dockmaster's station, and more just didn't open; making Sceotan seem like a ghost town. Nothing changed their minds, they simply didn't answer their doors, or ignored any commands given to them, until the tax was repealed.

The woman never cared about Weaver politics or power, but as soon as anything affected her people Mother Jimaiyo became an immovable mountain. Maybe that level of confidence, wisdom, and command is what came from being one of the three oldest Weavers living. It was remarkable really, the woman's influence was even present in Taia's thoughts, because she didn't think of her as Sister Aranya, she was simply Mother Jimaiyo, and always would be. A serving girl finally filled her cup with more kahve and she smiled at the girl. "Thank you."

