

The Great Teacher's Student

Kimberly J. Kreines

From set *Dragons of Tarkir*

In another time there were no dragons. In another time Narset was the khan of a clan known as the Jeskai. In another time she felt a great potential within her—one that she would never release, for in that time she fell at the hands of Zurgo Helmsmasher, the khan of the Mardu. But that time is gone, lost forever to endless eternities. This time is all that remains. In this time, dragons fill the skies of Tarkir, there are no khans, there is no clan known as the Jeskai, and Zurgo is a bell-striker. But one thing remains the same: Narset has a secret power burning inside of her—a restless potential that pulls on her, begging to be released.

“You have to learn to let things go.” Her mother’s words swam in Narset’s mind as she teetered on the precipice of the Eternities.

Oh, how she wished she could! How she longed to forget what was and leap into the unknown. Her skin crawled with impatient anticipation and her legs twitched and burned with a familiar restlessness, one she had known her whole life. Only now it was amplified; it was as if her body was telling her that this was the place she had always been meant to go, this was where she had been heading all these years.

She wanted to take the next step more than she had ever wanted anything.

There was so much out there. So many new things. So much to learn. So much to see.



Then why didn't she go? What was holding her back?

Ojutai.

The thought of him nearly dragged her all the way back to herself.

He was the reason she was clinging to the edge; he was the reason she had been holding on for so many years, fighting her restlessness.

Ojutai. Her teacher. Her dragon.

She hadn't thought about him that way in a long time.

She wished she could pick up the pieces and put them back together the way they were before; before, when she didn't know the things she knew now; before, when he was everything, when he knew everything, and when he held the promise to share it all with her.

"Fresh fruit! Honey-sweet apples!"

"Carrots plucked straight from the field! You can still see the dirt on 'em. Look here!"

"Hot breads! Nothing better than piping hot bread!"

The cries of the merchants, the bold colors of the wares, and the too-sweet aromas of the produce were like walls that made the marketplace feel too tight, too close, too much. The muscles of Narset's legs twitched and her lungs felt cramped. She tugged at her robe; it was strangling her. Her mother must have cinched it too tightly.

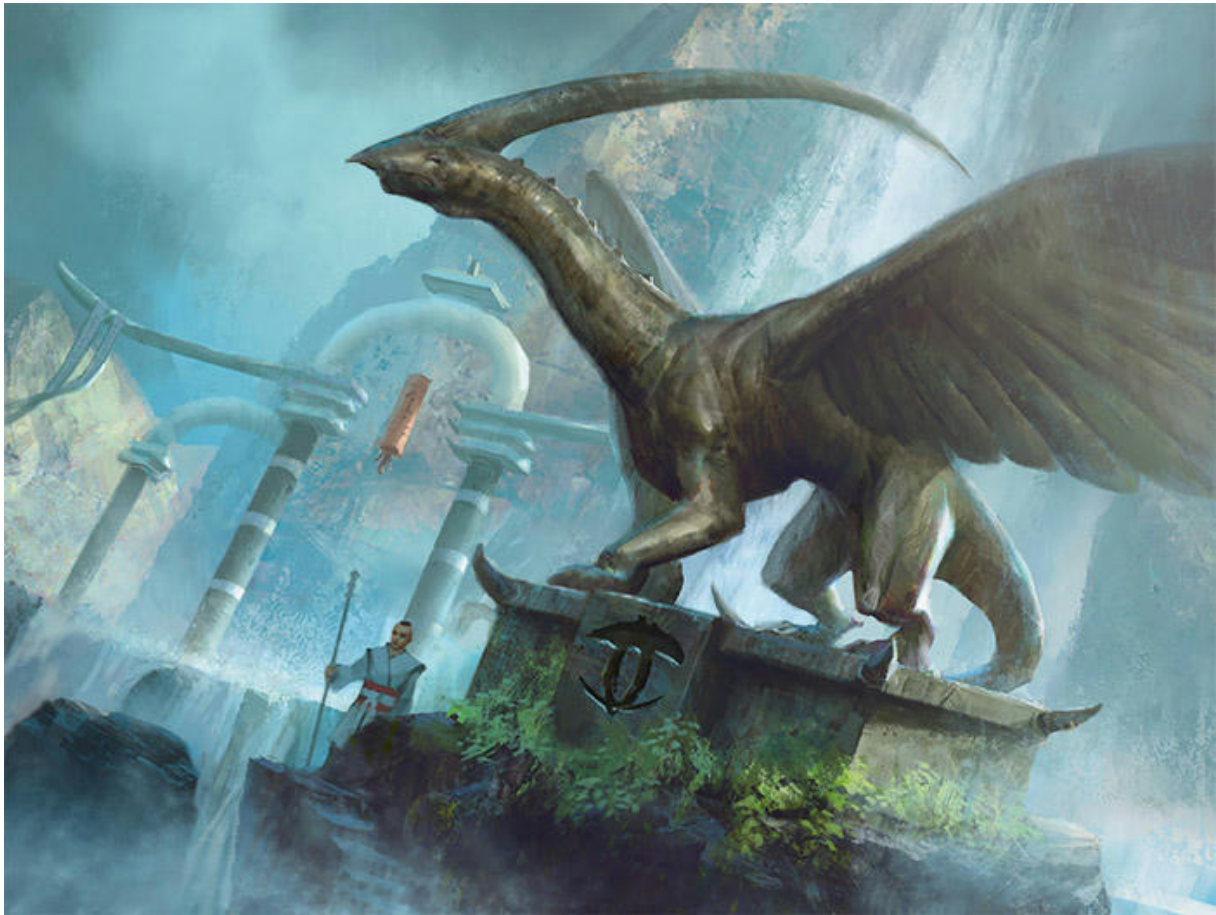
"Stand still," her mother scolded from above. "You'll knock something over." She was poring over the apples at the top of a tall mound too high for Narset to see.

Narset tried to stand still, but she couldn't. The restlessness inside her wanted her to move. Sometimes when she felt that way she distracted herself. She would count things, or search for patterns, or study people's expressions. But she knew the marketplace too well; she knew its numbers and she knew its patrons. She had already taken inventory. The man with the cane was limping less that day, putting more weight on his bad leg; Narset supposed the balm he had purchased from the herbalist the week before had worked to ease the pain. There were, as usual, three dozen meat slabs hanging at the butcher's stand with an average of eighteen striations per slab; the average number of striations hardly ever changed, although sometimes there was greater variance. The merchant at the squash stand had uneven stains on his sleeves and three stray threads hanging from his robe; he must have gotten it caught in his cart and had to pull himself free. And there were sixty-eight apples in the mound in front of Narset; that was accounting for the volume inside the mound, which she couldn't see but could predict well enough. There would be sixty-seven apples if her mother would ever just choose one.

Her mother hemmed and hawed, her fingers alighting first on one apple and then another, fluttering over the choices, but never settling.

She's never going to pick one, Narset thought. *We're never going to leave*. Panic set in. Her vision blurred, her ears rang, and her forehead began to sweat. She frantically searched for something else to distract her, but there was nothing else she could see. At eight, Narset wasn't tall enough to see over any of the stands or any of the bodies. It was like she was in a never-ending maze of tall sweaty, smelly people-trees.

She was trapped.



Art by Daniel Ljunggren

She struggled to draw the thick, cloying air into her lungs, but she couldn't get enough. Her body tingled and itched. It felt like her skin was warning her that it wasn't going to stay put much longer; if she didn't move, it would move without her and she wouldn't have skin anymore. She had to go. She had to get out of there.

"Take this one." Narset pointed to the nearest apple.

Her mother bent to inspect it. "No, no. It's bruised." She waved her hand dismissively. "And stop fidgeting, Narset."

Narset ignored the reprimand. "Then this one."

"Bad spot." Her mother barely looked. She was dancing her fingers over the fruit at the top of the mountain.

If it was an apple from up there that her mother wanted then that was what she would get. Narset jumped. "Then that one!" She pointed to one of the topmost fruits—and her sleeve snagged the long stem of it.

What happened next happened in slow motion. The apple wavered first forward and then back. Narset reached to steady it, but she was already on her way down from her leap, and when her fingers touched it they dragged the fruit to the precipice. It teetered there for a heartbeat and then began to tumble down.

"No!" She heard the apple merchant's desperate shout from somewhere above.

She reached for his precious piece of produce as it sailed off the stack and plummeted toward the floor.

She could predict the trajectory; she had studied falling objects before, and her hand connected just before it hit the ground.

“Ha! Got it!” She lifted her arm, holding the apple on display—as hundreds more rained down around her, thumping and bumping, hopping over each other and rolling across the floor.

“Oh no.” That shouldn’t have happened, Narset thought, not if the pile was stacked as tightly as she had assumed. However, if there were only sixty-five apples then there would have been structural instability and this behavior would make sense.

“My fruit! All of my beautiful fruit! It’s ruined!” the merchant cried.

“I’m sorry, I’m so sorry.” Her mother scampered across the floor, picking up the apples within her reach. “They’re fine. See?” She held one up. “They’ll be fine.”

The merchant marched around the stand. “They’re bruised.”

“How many are there?” Narset asked. “Because if there were only sixty-five then you should have—”

“You!” The merchant rounded on Narset. “Get away from my stand!”

Narset jumped back, bumping the corner of the stand. A dozen more apples tumbled to the ground.

“Get out! Out!” the merchant shouted.

Narset looked to her mother. “I’m only trying to explain. He stacked them wrong.”

“How dare you turn the blame on me!” the merchant bellowed. “I’ve been stacking apples for decades. Decades! And you come in and take out an entire day’s harvest in one fell swoop.”

“But sir—”

Her mother’s hand on Narset’s wrist cut her off. “Please,” her mother said. “You have to learn to let things go.”

“But—”

“Wait outside,” her mother nodded to the exit. “I’ll try to make this right.”

Narset didn’t bother to say that that’s what she had been trying to do: make it right. She didn’t want to argue any further because her mother had uttered the words she had been waiting desperately to hear. She was finally allowed to escape the too-tight marketplace; she was permitted to go outside.



Art by Florian de Gesincourt

She made a break for it, pushing past the hard stares of the other merchants and shoppers who had seen the debacle. She ducked under the melon booth, jumped over three baskets of bread, and flew through the parted curtain before anyone could stop her.

She was free.

The first breath of fresh air filled her lungs and her soul lifted.

The sun on her skin, the scent of fish in the nearby river, and the vast, endless space before her were perfection. That was the way things were supposed to be. Narset began to run. It's what she did, or rather what she couldn't help but do whenever there was unexplored space in front of her. She had never been on the far side of the market before; the land was all new to her. The thrill of it propelled her down the river, her restlessness turning to delight. The wind worked its way through her thick hair, cooling her scalp, and her feet learned the rocks with each step. She studied the flow of the river as it ran and memorized the patterns of the currents and eddies. She took account of the number and types of plants that were blooming and which were still barren. Her mind churned with the details of the world unfurling before her, devouring every minutia.

This was what she was made to do: to go, to find, to learn, to search, to run, to seek—

“Seek enlightenment.”

The voice startled her. It had sounded like someone had spoken in her ear. A tingle ran down her spine and she slowed.

“Hello?” She glanced over her shoulder. There was no one there. She told herself it was just the wind playing, nothing more. She fell back into step with the coursing water.

"Pursue wisdom." The voice sounded in her ear again.

Narset gasped and spun around so fast that she nearly fell into the river.

"Who's there?" Was someone following her?

She could see nothing but the low bushes that lined the water, the grassy field on the other side, and beyond that—"Wait." It couldn't be...

Narset staggered back, floundering to find her balance. It was. She knew exactly what she was looking at although she had never seen it before. There in the distance was the grandest of all the sanctuaries: Dragon's Eye. And perched atop it at the highest point was Dragonlord Ojutai, the Great Teacher. She knew him the moment she saw him, although he was a distant figure. She could make out his sleek, strong body silhouetted against the sun.



Art by Filip Burburan

"Gather knowledge."

It was his voice! Narset reeled. It was Ojutai's voice that she was hearing in her ear. But how could it be? He was so far away. And didn't he speak in Draconic?

"Find truth."

Once she understood what she was hearing, she heard his voice for what it was. It was far more complex than anything she had ever encountered—a fusion of grunts, clicks, clacks, scratches, snaps ticks, groans, squawks, growls, and perhaps a roar. But somehow it made sense to her; her hungry mind could parse its meaning.

As she listened to the sound that carried across the distance, she realized he must have been giving his lesson. Narset had heard of the lessons the dragon gave daily from his perch, but she never thought she would hear one.

“Ha-ha!” She threw up her arms, her insides bursting with excitement. “This is amazing!”

The dragon turned his head in Narset’s direction and she instinctively shrunk down. Was he looking at her?

“This is where it begins,” he said.

Was he speaking to her?

“I can show you the way.”

“Me?”

“You are on a quest for knowledge; a journey for wisdom,” Ojutai said.

“Yes,” Narset said. He understood her. The Great Teacher understood what she had been trying to explain to her mother for so long.

“You have come to the right place. I know all there is to know.” The dragon puffed out his chest proudly. “And I will teach those who are willing to learn.”

She knew it was strange to feel that way, but she couldn’t help but think his words were meant for her and her alone. “I am willing,” Narset’s voice was no more than a whisper. “I want to learn everything.” She focused her gaze on his silhouette, and although he was no more than a speck on the horizon, she felt closer to Ojutai in that moment than she had ever felt to anyone before. “I want to be your student,” she said. “Please, let me be your student.”

The dragon nodded.

She had seen it. It was not a trick of the light. Ojutai, the greatest dragon in the land had nodded his assent. She would be his student and he her teacher. And she would learn all there was to know.

And she had learned. She had learned so very much.

From that day on, Narset greeted her trips to the marketplace with anticipation rather than apprehension. Her mother had found it agreeable that Narset wait outside where she couldn’t knock anything over and land the family with more apples than they could ever hope to eat as long as Narset was there to carry the filled bags back home at the end of the day. She was allowed to wander as far down the riverbank as the bend, and as it turned out the bend was the perfect vantage point. From there, she could see Ojutai’s silhouette unobscured and she could hear his voice crisp and clear from across the water.

Over the next three years, Narset studied, trained, and practiced under the Great Teacher from afar. She learned of the ancient wisdom of dragons and the endless wells of knowledge they possessed. She learned that of all the dragons in all the land, Ojutai was the oldest, the wisest, the most powerful. And he was her teacher.

With her dragon as her guide she studied the draconic aspect of cunning and sharpened her mind, working through puzzles and solving riddles. She exercised her body, too, learning what to do by watching Ojutai’s silhouette and mimicking his movements. She practiced in every spare moment she could find, and quickly increased her strength, stamina, balance, and dexterity. The bags she carried back from the marketplace soon felt as light as bags of cotton. And if she had wanted them to be lighter,

she could have cast a spell to make it so. Her curious mind adored the complexities of spellcasting. There were so many moving parts, so much to keep track of, so many concepts and layers to become intimately familiar with. And she threw herself into the task of it. She learned how to wield the magic of the plane like the dragons of Tarkir had done for ages.



Art by Lake Hurwitz

Much of the restlessness she felt subsided, but not all of it. Narset's insides still fidgeted and stirred when she thought of how far away Dragon's Eye Sanctuary was. Although she knew that in many ways she was close to Ojutai, the physical distance that separated them was great. She longed to one day train alongside the Great Teacher on his perch, and she sent quiet pleas out to him every day.

"Ojutai, my dragon," from her inverted position in a one-armed handstand on the riverbank, her gaze set on Ojutai's form, "my greatest wish is to learn all that you teach." She worked up her courage to say the next part. "I have come so far, but I know I could learn so much more if I could study at your side. Help me find a path to you and I will forever be your most devoted student."

"Hello, student." The voice startled her. It was not Ojutai's voice; it was not the voice of a dragon at all. It had come from somewhere up by her feet.

Had she not been well practiced in concentration and balance she would have tumbled to the ground. As it was, she managed to hold on to her center and lower herself into a standing position with only the slightest hint of a wobble in her left ankle. She glared down at her ankle, silently cursing it; it was a weak point for her, often refusing to cooperate in her exercises.

"Impressive."

Narset spun around to see a tall, regal aven standing at arm's length.

"I wouldn't be too hard on that ankle if I were you," the aven said, nodding down to Narset's left foot. "Often the things we perceive as our most undesirable imperfections turn out to be our strongest assets."

Narset gaped. The aven wore a robe, which she recognized—a dragonspeaker's robe!

"I can see that I have disturbed you and I beg your pardon," the aven said. "I would not normally interrupt a student's practice, but this message comes urgently from—"

"Ojutai." Narset said the dragon's name without thinking, but as she said it certainty set in. The dragonspeaker's robe was not just any dragonspeaker's robe—the lines of the fabric, the decoration, it was unmistakable. Blood rushing away from her head, Narset lowered herself into a bow. "Dragonspeaker Ishai."



Art by Zack Stella

"Ah, so you know who I am." Narset glanced up to see the aven cock her head. "Impressive, again."

Narset stood up, only barely stopping herself from wheeling straight into the elegant aven. "You're—you're his—and you're, well you're here, and you're talking to me. Ojutai's dragonspeaker is talking to me!" She squealed and then threw her hand up to cover her mouth. She couldn't believe that sound had escaped her lips in front of Ojutai's dragonspeaker.

The aven clucked a short, kind laugh. "Yes, student, I am here to speak to you. Ojutai"—she said his name with the correct Draconic accent, flicking her wings to add the appropriate emphasis—"has heard of your dedicated practice. We all have. You are quite the talk up in Dragon's Eye Sanctuary."

"Dragon's Eye Sanctuary." Narset's scalp tingled and her face felt hot and then cold and then both at the same time. She faltered, lightheaded.

"Breathe, young one." Ishai—Ojutai's dragonspeaker!—lifted her wing to steady Narset.

Narset did as the aven said, sucking in a long, deep breath. Slowly the world ceased its spinning.

Ishai patted Narset's shoulder gently, reassuringly. "It pleases me greatly to see your enthusiasm. And it will please Ojutai all the more. That is, if you agree to come."

"To—to Dragon's Eye Sanctuary?" Narset whispered.

"Yes," Ishai said. "To study under the Great Teacher."

"You're serious?" Narset looked into Ishai's eyes.

The Aven held her gaze. "Of course."

This was real. This was really happening. The moment had finally come; she would finally journey to the top of the mountain. She would finally meet her teacher face to face. She would finally learn all there was to know.

All Narset could do was nod.

Their first meeting had been everything she had hoped, everything she had dreamed—everything. When Ojutai greeted her, Narset returned the greeting in Draconic, and the Great Teacher smiled. She would see him smile many more times over the course of the next few years. As she trained with the other students at Dragon's Eye Sanctuary, the eyes of the dragon were often on her. His gaze empowered her; she performed at her best when he watched. And he smiled when she did well.

Often, she felt his words too were meant for her alone to hear. It was as though the two of them were engaged in a private conversation and others were merely eavesdropping. No one else could hope to understand the true depth of meaning in what passed between them, for no one else had a mind like hers and Ojutai's—not even the skywise. Narset did not mean to be arrogant, those were just the facts. Her mind was more like a dragon's mind than a human's. She learned more and faster than any other student at the Sanctuary, and the more she learned the closer she felt to her teacher.



Art by Chase Stone

As she looked back now, she recognized her time at the sanctuary as the best years of her life. She was happier than she had ever been; she was challenged, recognized, fulfilled. Her restlessness had ceased haunting her; she had felt a sense of peace. And while she wasn't physically moving, she knew she was on a path, going where she was meant to go, becoming who she was meant to be. Ojutai was leading her. And not a day went by that she didn't thank her dragon for the gift.

Narset advanced more quickly than any other student, climbing the ranks of Dragon's Eye Sanctuary, moving upward from the lowest balconies to the highest terraces, until one day Ojutai called for her to come stand on his own private perch. He interrupted lessons to do so, requesting her presence after she had won a practice match against her peer, Taigam. As she ascended the final flight of stairs, Narset felt Taigam's glare burning into her back. He had been at the Sanctuary much longer than she. She knew he longed to be where she was, but she also knew he would not stand there until he learned to purify his quest, until he learned to seek wisdom instead of power.

She pushed her awareness of Taigam aside and cleared her mind before taking that step up onto Ojutai's perch. It was the most significant step she had ever taken.

"My student, Narset, it is time. Your hunger for knowledge is your greatest strength. You have become strong, and powerful, and wise because you have never stopped seeking enlightenment." The dragon beamed down at her. She knew what was about to come, and for one glorious moment everything felt perfect. "I now bestow upon you the title of Master, which you have assuredly earned, and with it all the honor and responsibility it brings." Ojutai bowed his head and rested his giant paw on her shoulder.

Narset bowed her head in return and clasped her small hand over the dragon's paw, making no attempt to wipe the hot tear that streaked down her cheek. At fifteen, she was the youngest master Ojutai had ever named. She had reached the top.

She turned to look down from the summit of Dragon's Eye Sanctuary, down at the world below. It was the first time, she realized, that she was not looking up at Ojutai's perch.

It felt strange.

The students below her cheered—or at least most of them. The skywise soared around her in a display of celebration. And Ojutai's bright bursts of magic danced and cavorted in the sky.



Art by Willian Murai

This was it then. She had done it. She had reached the end...

Suddenly, a ringing started somewhere deep in Narset's ears.

There was nowhere else to go.

There was nothing more to learn.

Her face flushed and the moment started to fade. And just like that she was trapped. Her vision blurred and her forehead sweated. In her mind she was back in the marketplace.

Ojutai looked down at her, pride in his eyes. She could tell he expected her to speak, to thank him, to celebrate. But she could do nothing more than fight the urge to run. And though the thought shocked her, she could not help but feel that this was the dragon's fault. She could not help but feel that this moment was supposed to be different, that there was supposed to be more. He had promised that he knew everything, but everything couldn't just end. She wanted to cry out. Her journey couldn't be over.

She wondered now: had he known what she would do? The wise Ojutai, the Great Teacher who knew all, had he known then that she would run? She hadn't meant to. She would never have left him on purpose. She wanted to tell him that. She would tell him that now if she believed he would listen.

"I'm sorry," she whispered out across the water.

There was no answer.

Although Narset fought the restlessness for nearly a year after the day it set in, it only worsened. Her insides bucked like a wild storm, tearing her apart. She had to move, she had to go. Since she could not climb any higher, Narset decided to descend the mountain.

The descent went more quickly than she anticipated. Once she started running, she did not slow. And when she reached the bottom she kept going because her legs would not cease carrying her.

She did not stop until she discovered a hidden doorway tucked away in a corner of the mountain and sealed shut. Even then she did not stop for long. She cast a spell to open the door. Behind it she found a passage and stairs that went down. She descended them. And when they ended on a platform that offered another staircase, she descended that one as well.

She kept going down, down, down, winding through passages and crawling through partially collapsed tunnels. She would have burrowed deeper and deeper into the land forever, studying the rocks, learning the sand and silt, but all too soon the tunnel came to an end.

At first, her restlessness reared, but before it could sink its claws into her, Narset saw that there was somewhere else to go. The walls of the room were lined with scrolls! She could read them; they would take her somewhere; they would teach her more.

As she raced to the nearest scroll, desperate, she was vaguely aware of where she must be. It had to be an ancient archive, a place that she had only heard of in legend, a place that Ojutai had all but forbidden. She did not care, could not care—all she could feel was the need to search, to seek, to know.



Art by Chase Stone

With as much care as she could muster in her mind's ravenous state she unfurled the longest of the scrolls. It was brittle, but intact. And it was filled with words—glorious words that conveyed history, knowledge, and wisdom. She knelt on the dusty, brick ground spreading the words out before her, and she began to read. She felt like she was moving again.

The ancient scrolls contained an account of Tarkir's past, but one she had not learned before. While some of it overlapped with what the Great Teacher had taught her, there were also stray pieces that stuck out and contradicted. The details were twisted: clans that served khans, not dragonlords, and spellcasting and magic she did not recognize. And from what the scrolls said, it seemed that there had been dragons before Ojutai.

Was the Great Teacher not the oldest dragon on Tarkir? Was he not the wisest? Was he not the one who knew everything?

The idea took root in Narset's mind. She had to know the truth. She had to know if there was more she could learn.

When she ran out of scrolls to read in the archives under Dragon's Eye, she decided to search for more somewhere else. She ran back up the stairs and out into the light—and then straight into Taigam's hard, muscled chest.

"I knew you were down there," Taigam spat.

"Let me through." Narset had no patience for his petulance. Not now.

"You know as well as I that there are things down there unfit for Ojutai's followers, especially those who are called master." He lingered on the word.

“Taigam, please, out of my way. I must go.” The restlessness was buzzing inside Narset, the burning need to know the truth was a force of its own pushing her from within. She would not be able to resist it much longer.



Art by Jason A. Engle

“I have no choice but to report you for blasphemy. You have betrayed Ojutai. You have chosen to follow a dark path, and for that the Great Teacher will punish you.”

“Then let him!” Narset erupted with power, blasting past Taigam and ignoring his screams.

Narset remembered exactly how she had felt in that moment. It was the same feeling that had propelled her in her youth under the melon booth, over the baskets of bread, and out into freedom. It was the same feeling that had carried her up the mountain of Dragon’s Eye Sanctuary, through her training, to Ojutai’s perch. And it was the same feeling that swelled in her chest, pushing her to let go, to take the leap, to walk away.

She hated the feeling. In her life all it had caused her was pain. But never so much pain as when it had pushed her to learn the truth about Ojutai.

After the archive at Dragon’s Eye, Narset had succumbed to her restlessness and she let it guide her actions. It was hungry for more, always hungry for more. There was more knowledge out there, she could feel it, and she was desperate to know it.

She found other archives under Cori Mountain and Riverwheel, and in them she found more scrolls. From the words written on the scrolls she pieced together a deeper account of that alternative history of Tarkir. She learned of a Spirit Dragon, Ugin, who was the source of all magic on the plane, as well as the dragon tempests. She learned of a time when clans warred, and when dragons kept their distance.

It fascinated her, all of it.

It should have been enough, but it wasn't. She searched for more.

And then she found the archive under Dirgur.

Unlike the other archives, the one under Dirgur was not well preserved. It seemed to have been looted and broken long ago. Part of her hoped it was utterly empty; something inside told her that if she continued to look she wasn't going to like what she found.

On the fourth week of searching, she came upon what seemed to be the singular scroll remaining at the archive. It was locked away deep underground and sealed behind a thick door. For a long moment Narset did nothing more than stare at it. She could hardly believe she had found anything at all. Then, fingers trembling and heart beating wildly, she reached for it.

She unrolled the scroll on the ground, summoned a cold fire on her fingertips for light, and began to read.

The writing was rushed and smudged, as though whoever had written it knew there was very little time. And as she read she understood why.

The scroll was an account of a meeting between the khans of long ago.



Art by Yeong-Hao Han

She learned of the khans' hope to end the dragons in order to save their clans. She learned of their disagreements and their plans. And she learned of a name: Sarkhan—a man, a dragon, a khan—one who had saved the Spirit Dragon and thereby saved the dragons of Tarkir. And then she learned one last thing, one final truth. The meeting had been brought to an abrupt end as two dragons and their broods swooped in to attack the gathered khans. One of those dragons had been Ojutai.

As she read her teacher's name, Narset's back straightened and her hands clenched. The brittle paper cracked in her fists. At the same moment, something inside her cracked, too. She felt it breaking in her chest like an egg. Whatever was inside the thing that broke was hot and thick and it ran down her ribcage, spreading outward through her body. And then she was pulled backward with such a force as she had never felt before and ripped away from Tarkir.

Another world extended before her. A new world. An unexplored world. It held promise—promise of knowledge, of possibilities, of places to go.

It was wonderful.

And Narset almost went.

But at the last moment she pulled herself back.

Gasping and quivering, Narset crumpled into a heap on top of the very last scroll on Tarkir.

She still couldn't explain exactly why she had not gone.

Since that time, she had felt the force tug on her insides nearly every hour of every day. It would have been so easy to give in to it. It would have been so right. But she had held back. She had instead scoured Tarkir—every crevasse, every mountaintop—convinced there had to be more to learn, that there had to be more to find.

Now she had come full circle, she had seen all the land and witnessed all of its secrets. And she sat again at the river's bend.

"We must always find time to reflect on what we have learned." The gravelly voice suddenly drew Narset's gaze upward.

Ojutai.

Her dragon, her teacher, silhouetted against the first rays of the rising sun. He had come out on his perch to teach the morning's lesson.



Art by Steve Prescott

“So, what have you learned?” He turned his head toward her.

He was looking at her.

“What have you found?”

He was speaking to her.

Narset’s insides trembled. She had thought for so long that he had disowned her as Taigam had promised he would. She was a heretic. She had disobeyed.

“What do you know?”

Perhaps Taigam had been wrong. Perhaps Ojutai was still her teacher. His question rang in Narset’s ears. What did she know? She knew Tarkir. She knew it for all it was, for its beauty, its wonders, and for its imperfections. And often it was those imperfections that were its greatest assets. She smiled up at her dragon. He was part of Tarkir, and because of his presence, the land, the people, and the history were better. The world was stronger; it was more perfect. She could see that now.

“I have learned the truth,” she whispered.

Ojutai nodded. And Narset knew that while she could not see it he was smiling too. A warmth filled her. A peace. “Once we reflect we must then move forward,” Ojutai said. “All one needs do is—”

“Seek enlightenment,” Narset added her voice to his.

“For there is always more to learn.” With that, Ojutai spread his wings and took to the sky.

“Thank you,” Narset said. Her words were carried away on the winds of Tarkir as she let go.



Narset Transcendent | Art by Magali Villeneuve