

originalficfest prompt-- 21. *It would have been easier to lie and say that she knew nothing.*

Title: the birdcatcher

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Rating: PG-13, but only for the violence at the end, I guess.

Warnings/Notes: slave!fic. 523 words.

She knows her place in society. She knows, and walks with her eyes deliberately pointed downwards, gazing instead at the clothed shoulders and torsos of whoever passes her alongside. The path she takes is dusty, heat making her mouth dry and her feet sticky. The flimsy sandals she wears, a delicate twist of the golden fibers of her station, do nothing to protect the soles of her feet from the dust clouds kicking up as she shuffles along. She knows her place in society, and keeps her face averted so she doesn't draw any more attention to herself.

Her coloring, stubbornly unchanged despite long years of 'treatments', gives her away as exotic. She moves quickly through the masses in the market, unable to blend in with the paler women and men around her. As she presses through the crush of bodies, only the knot of hair hanging loose behind her left ear, and the sparkle of gold as she makes a step keep her from being accosted. She is exotic, and what is more, she is owned by the Noi.

She makes her way through gate upon gate in the city, some lingering labyrinthine wall system guiding the residents of the arid land up and around, but never close to her destination. Never close enough, unless you are of the privileged few with the knowledge. The thought passes through her, stabbing white-hot behind her eyes and clenching her lungs tight. It would have been so easy to lie; to say she knew nothing. She breathes tightly and presses even further forward, the filmy gauze of her robes catching the down currents of the streets and backwards passages she traverses.

The closer she gets to her destination, the more she finds herself gnawing at the web of skin between her thumb and forefinger, pressing the inked abjad between sharp incisors. She feels it ache faintly, and moves on, ever forward. The Noi would not approve of the nervous gesture, breaking the pristine beauty they desire of all their exotics. She takes her hand and tucks it into her robes, the metallic tang of blood and jewelry mixing with fear in her throat. She moves ever on, spiraling in and out of the paths to her final goal, a knot forming in her belly that only winds tighter with her every step.

She knows her place in society, and wishes herself free only a moment as she sees the wide entry portals and the lounging guards, taking advantage of the respite between the first and second risings of the suns. It's a futile wish to be free, she knows, and she keeps her pace and stance heavy with the understanding that all she is, all she can be, is a tool of her master's will. She is a pretty one, dark and deceptively built, but a tool nonetheless. She knows her place, even as the knife she bears on her thigh becomes visible, and the heart of the latest in a line of upstarts is spitted upon it.

Every day, she is reminded that a tool is only useful if wielded by the proper hands.