

Life as a Young Nomad

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BANG BANG BANG!

“Ugh,” Kalaka grumbled. Her dad was the chief of their nomadic tribe. He wanted to stay as nomads while Kalaka and Zub wanted to be villagers that stayed in complex villages. How long do we have to live as nomads? I heard life in Mesopotamia as a villager was better! She thought angrily. Chief Eddu was crushing lizard skins with a rock early in the morning. Why must he wake up so early in the morning just to wake everyone else up too?

Well, since I’m already up, I’ll go see if Zub’s awake yet. Zub was Kalaka’s best friend since their fathers were hunting partners. The tribe was migrating because all the animals were migrating, too. Kalaka slept in a portable tent just her size. So did Zub. The tribe Kalaka was in the Tiger Tribe. She told anyone who asked that she was thirteen, but she was probably more like twelve. No one could tell for sure, because the Tiger Tribe did not have a yearly calendar, just weekly and daily. She slipped on her wolf fur boots her dad made for her when he’d killed an extra wolf on a hunting trip. They were a bit too big, but she didn’t mind. Kalaka dashed out of her tent, running to Zub’s tent. Kalaka slapped the side of his tent loudly.

“Kal?” Zub stuck his head out of his tent. “Ha! I thought you’d never be awake this early!”

“Well, dad woke me up. You?” Kalaka sat outside of his tent as he packed it up.

“Chief Eddu woke me up, too.”

“Well, what do you want to do today, Zub?” Kalaka asked.

“I dunno,” Zub said, as he finished packing. “We’re leaving today so...”

“I’ve got it!”

“What?” Zub asked excitedly.

“We could leave a message for the next tribe that stays here!” Kalaka said cheerfully.

“Yes!” Zub agreed happily. “Hold up. Lemme put my tent away.” Zub folded his tent, then stuffed the folded tent into its bag. Then he walked over to the pile of other kids’ tent bags.

“What are you doing, Zub?” Kalaka wondered out loud. “You’re going to lose your tent!”

“No,” Zub argued. “I put my name on it.”

“Mhm,” Kalaka mumbled, unconvinced.

“Let’s leave the message on a rock!” Zub said, changing the subject.

“Yeah!” Kalaka agreed excitedly. “Will this do?” Kalaka pointed to a rock that was the size of her torso.

“Yup,” He nodded. “Let’s do it!”

Hold up. Here comes Abhi! Kalaka thought, her heart racing. She felt warm feelings toward Abhi every time she saw him. Zub did not look excited to see Abhi, but also not incurious. Abhi was a young boy, around the age of fourteen. He had blonde hair and wore wolfskin robes, the same material as Kalaka’s boots.

“Hey, Ab,” Zub said as Abhi walked by.

He’s so popular! Kalaka thought. Hopefully he’d never like a girl like me! Kalaka was used to boys drooling over her, but this kid... he never even payed attention to Kalaka; as if she didn’t exist.

“Mañci rōju,” Abhi said to Zub joylessly, walking right past Kalaka and Zub. Mañci rōju means “good day” in Telugu, the Tiger Tribe’s language other than English.

“Abhi?” Kalaka forced words out.

“What?” Abhi stopped in his tracks, but didn’t turn around.

“Do you like Sukra?” She asked, her voice low, as if she didn’t want anyone else to hear. Sukra was a girl who had black hair that went down to her hips. If it weren’t our culture, Kalaka thought, I would have cut my stupid hair a long time ago. Śukravāram meant “friday” in Telugu, so Sukra meant “fri” in English.

What got Kalaka worried was that Abhi didn’t say anything, but continued to walk away.