

AETHER TORRENT #22
"NAUR'S WARMTH"

Written by

Jack Duffe

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FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAIN RAPIDS - DAY

Tall gray white-capped mountains not unlike the Rockies give us some beautiful scenery for a moment.

A rapid river strewn with huge rocks ROARS through a valley.

The 100-foot yacht lies on the bank of the rapids with at least one huge hole in its hull. KLAUSER drinks from the rapids.

A sign has been tied around the helm wheel, reading: "FREE TO LOVING HOME. SLIGHT LEAKING PROBLEM."

CIRRUS (V.O.)
We have everything packed,
right? No turning back now.

INT. STOLEN YACHT - MAIN SALON - DAY

TORI unzips her duffel bag on a dining table in the living room area of the yacht. The bag is stuffed with clothes and has some new duct-tape repairs. AVANI peeks in.

TORI
I got my share. How did you fit
so many clothes in here?

AVANI
It's called "folding."

Avani jostles the mesh bag that once held peaches and now holds her weapons and some smaller bags. CIRRUS (human) eyes some pillows on a couch that curves around a coffee table.

AVANI (CONT'D)
And I have the necessaries.
Praise below that the market in
Broken Axe had some soap.
(calling back)
Naur? How about you?

NAUR'S CABIN

NAUR holds his elbow and covers his mouth. His green eyes look worried.

The drawers of his dresser are open and empty.

His big camping backpack lies full on the bed. The bed sheets are missing.

NAUR
I could have sworn...

AVANI (O.S.)
Naur?

NAUR
Coming!

Naur hefts his pack.

NAUR (CONT'D)
Well. Just a trinket. Perhaps it will turn up later.

MAIN SALON

Naur walks in. Cirrus POUNDS the throw pillows into Tori's bag. They just barely fit.

NAUR (CONT'D)
Money, food and blankets are accounted for.

TORI
(struggles with bag zipper)
Awesome. That treasure's so close I can smell it. Just a few mountains and a boat ride and we'll be there.

AVANI
But at this latitude and that altitude, it may get cold. Can you handle it, Naur?

NAUR

It is all right. Water hurts,
but cold does not. No matter how
frigid the air, it will be warm
enough if I am with you all.

Cirrus smiles and rubs Naur's head. Naur smiles back.

TORI

Besides, it's summer. It won't
be *that* chilly.

EXT. SNOWY VALLEY - DAY

A mountain valley is caked in snow. A village sits in the low
curve.

Two male villagers, FATMAN and OLDMAN, ascend a snowy slope.
Oldman is old. Fatman is plump and middle-aged and carries a
rifle on his back.

Fatman suddenly stops and holds out his arm. Oldman stops.

Something furry makes soft DIGGING sounds behind a tree. Only
its rear legs and tail, both thick in white and gold fur,
stick out.

Fatman takes his rifle -- a repeating-fire one out of the
1880s -- off his back. He crouches and aims. Oldman crouches
behind him and they talk in low tones.

FATMAN

That's the one, right, Oldman?

OLDMAN

The same. It's one of those
elemental monsters. I saw it
appear the day the snow came.

The creature stands upright. It's a humanoid child, visibly
no older than ten, with small reindeer antlers and pupil-
free, pale blue eyes. We'll know him as the WINTERKING.

Fatman looks up from his gun sight.

FATMAN

A child?

OLDMAN

A monster in the form of one.
Come on, do it or the village
will smother under this snow.

Fatman hesitates.

The Winterking freezes. He LEAPS away an instant before a GUNSHOT is heard and a bit of the tree bark SHATTERS.

Fatman stands, reloads and FIRES repeatedly.

The Winterking BOUNDS away deer-like, far too fast to hit.

Fatman lowers his rifle.

FATMAN

Damned monster.

A BLIZZARD suddenly blows down the slope. The men REACT.

A vaguely-outlined BEAST on all fours is visible through the blizzard. All we can see of it is its white color.

The blizzard HOWLS and blasts the men with ice and snow. Oldman stumbles backward and ROLLS down and away.

The driving snow rapidly obscures Fatman.

The white beast vanishes in a SNOWY WHIRLWIND.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAMP 1 - NIGHT

Naur tenses his hand at a pile of sticks. The sticks IGNITE.

The party camps on a suspiciously flat earth circle somewhere on a snowless mountain. Hollow earthen mounds serve as tents. Curved-top cubes of soil serve as fireside seats.

NAUR

This brings back memories. The
very first place I hid from
others' hatred was on a
mountain. It was hotter, though.

AVANI

Oh? Where was it?

Tori eats some unidentifiable meat jerky. Cirrus sits cross-legged on her cube.

NAUR

I never learned its name. I hid there the day I was born.

CIRRUS

Someone left you on a mountain?

Naur closes his eyes. The campfire CRACKLES.

NAUR

No. I ran there.

EXT. NAUR'S VILLAGE - NIGHT

A village made of hides stretched over enormous bones takes up part of a small island at sunset. The island is made mostly of volcano.

YOUNG NAUR, the size of a one-year-old, hugs his knees behind a tree. His naked skin is as red as ever.

NAUR (V.O.)

In my first memory I was alone.
My second memory is of running.

A metal, bone-handled axe strikes the tree with a WHUNK just above his head. Young Naur shuts his eyes and SELF-IMMOLATES.

Young Naur scrambles through the thick island forest on all fours, BLAZING fire in his wake. Obscure RAIZA SHAPES made amorphous and fearsome by memory chase him with spears.

AVANI (V.O.)

But how...?

TORI (V.O.)

Raiza pups can survive without parents. Not that many need to.

NAUR (V.O.)

But I did. And I quickly became aware of many things.

EXT. NAUR'S VOLCANO - NIGHT

The volcano is active, slowly bleeding red and black into the sea. Young Naur reaches the edge of the caldera, stares in for a moment, turns around, crouches and hugs his knees.

NAUR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I was hated for my fire. I was hated for my skin. Hate meant death, and more than anything I wanted to live.

Seen from the caldera, a big steam-powered cruise ship is moored at the island's single dock. Young Naur stares at it, stands up and runs around the caldera toward it.

NAUR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

So I hid my fire, hid my skin, and learned as much as I could whenever and wherever I could. All to be left alone and alive.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAMP 1 - NIGHT

It's quiet. Naur swallows and SNIFFS sharply.

NAUR (CONT'D)

Sorry to kill the mood. I am not used to talking about myself. Since it draws attention. And.

Naur covers his eyes and SOBS softly. The ladies all stand but Cirrus gets to him first and HUGS him tight.

CIRRUS

It's okay. Shh, shh.

TORI

Don't worry, Naur, you can open up around us. You're a part of... whatever this thing we have is.

Avani joins Cirrus in the hug. Naur LAUGHS half-sobbing.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SLOPE - DAY

The party hikes up a grassy mountain slope. They're seen from above, giving us another chance to indulge in scenery porn.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAMP 2 - NIGHT

Naur spills some hard corn kernels on a flat rock and holds his hands over them. They POP into popcorn.

Tori, Avani and Cirrus look impressed. Klauser pecks at the popcorn and Cirrus shoos him away to take some for herself.

Naur smiles.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY

The party reaches a rockier elevation of a different mountain. More scenery.

EXT. MOUNTAIN FOREST - DAY

Avani picks some bright red raspberries alone. Something SQUEAL-ROARS behind her.

A BOAR with a red mane, dark green skin and white tusks angrily STOMPS the ground. It's four feet tall.

Avani slowly reaches a hand toward her pocket. Naur runs in front of her and swipes his claws, making a FLASH OF FIRE.

The fire spooks the boar, which turns and runs, SQUEALING.

Avani holds her hand over her heart and breathes. Naur smiles back at her.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAMP 3 - NIGHT

Naur presses his hands against a rounded wall of rough rock.

The wall is part of a makeshift bathtub, barrel-shaped and tall enough to drown in. Tori leans her elbows on the edge as the water around her STEAMS. She looks blissful.

TORI

How did I ever camp without you?

Naur smiles a third time.

EXT. SNOWY VALLEY - NIGHT

Fatman is light blue and frozen stiff with a fearful expression. The Winterking's white hand touches his face, closes his mouth and eyes.

The Winterking blinks his soft, harmless eyes. He speaks barely above a whisper in the voice of a child.

WINTERKING

So it goes.

EXT. MOUNTAIN FOREST - DAY

Snow has accumulated in uneven splotches on the floor of a pine forest. Tori's sneakers softly CRUNCH the snow, followed by Avani's feet in black loafers we haven't seen before.

Tori wears her jacket, Avani wears her cargo pants and green sweatshirt, and Cirrus and Naur, guiding Klauser, wear two of Naur's apparently many cloaks.

TORI

Okay, Avani, you were right.
It's a *little* cold. Just a bit.

AVANI

(little smile)
I know mountains well.

CIRRUS

But the air's strange here. It
smells colder than it should.

TORI

Duh. It's supposed to be summer.

Cirrus lags, letting Naur take Klauser past her.

CIRRUS

(sniffing occasionally)
That's not what I mean. There's
no saturation. It got cold here
only recently, and fast.

AVANI (O.S.)

Lord Below! *Look* at that!

EXT. SNOWY VALLEY - DAY

The edge of the forest overlooks the vast snow-whitened valley and the village at the very bottom. Cirrus rushes out to stare with Tori, Avani, Naur and Klauser.

TORI

Whoa.

The party keeps staring. Naur winces.

STEAM rises from melting snow around his ankles.

EXT. SNOWY VILLAGE - DAY

The party enters the village. Naur, fully cloaked and wrapped, rides Klauser. Cirrus wears her cloak but her skin is still visible.

NAUR

Please, Cirrus, at least pull your hood up.

CIRRUS

Don't worry, I won't attract--

A snowball abruptly PIFFS upside Cirrus's head.

ERIC, a pudgy village boy in a blue cap and red jacket, hurls snowballs at Cirrus. Cirrus lets them pelt her.

ERIC

Go away, snow beast!

CIRRUS

Stop that. Haven't you seen a wind tiger before?

ERIC

All you monsters are the same!
 (yelling)
 Everybody! The snow beast is an ugly old lady! Hurry, it's--

A melon-sized snowball knocks Eric down with a WHUMP.

Avani holds her fists on her hips. Cirrus dusts her hands.

AVANI

Cirrus!

CIRRUS

Don't be rude, little boy.

Eric gets up, tears streaming down his plump cheeks.

ERIC

Shut up! You killed my dad!

Cirrus holds still. A snowball hits her chest.

INT. OLDMAN'S LODGE - DAY

Eric, no older than 8, hides behind the wooden chair where Oldman sits.

OLDMAN

My sincere apologies, madam.
Eric here was overzealous.

Tori, Avani, Cirrus and Naur sit with Oldman near a fireplace in the large living room of a wooden lodge. The wood, stone, furniture and rugs are all warm-colored.

CIRRUS

No harm done. My name's Cirrus.
(gesturing to each)
That's Tori, Avani, Naur.

OLDMAN

My name's Oldman. I suppose it's
a name I grew into. I also
suppose I'm Eric's guardian now.

Eric clutches the back of the chair and stares at Naur. Naur tugs down the hood of his cloak.

OLDMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You see, he lost his only parent
to the monster that has thrown
our valley into winter.

Cirrus looks genuinely sad.

CIRRUS

I'm sorry.

AVANI

Tell us about this monster.

Oldman rests his chin on his wrinkled fist.

OLDMAN

Its true form of a white beast
is hard to see through the snow
it always summons, but it can
take the form of a young child.

Naur peeks out from under his hood.

OLDMAN (CONT'D)

Its very presence changed the
seasons. We have tried to kill
it, but it always evades us.

Naur holds his head up. His hood is deep, but his nose sticks
out in that position.

NAUR

It wants only to live. Leave it
alone.

Tori cringes -- she sees where this is going.

OLDMAN

This monster came to *our* village
and hurts us simply by existing.
To end its life is to end its
harm. What would *you* have us do,
stranger? Talk with it?

NAUR

You need not. I will.

Everyone looks at Naur. Naur only looks at Eric.

NAUR (CONT'D)

Monsters are all the same, yes?
We can convince it to leave.

OLDMAN

Are you *mad*?

Naur stands up straight and pulls back his hood. Oldman gapes a little.

NAUR

Your monster is a child, hiding
alone in a new and strange
place. Words and kindness will
work on it. I am proof.

EXT. SNOWY MOUNTAIN - DAY

A wide patch of bare thinly-grassed ground creeps through the snow, which *MELTS* and *EVAPORATES* at the borders.

Naur leads Tori, Avani and Cirrus up a snowy slope, erasing a path through the waist-deep snow with his outstretched hands. Some pine trees tower around them.

AVANI

The proper term is "daemon."
It's a monster imbued with a
combined element, which the gods
almost *never* grant. In this case
it is clearly Ice.

CIRRUS

(scratching head)

So if gods love monsters, and if
daemons are super-monsters, then
gods *really* love daemons.

AVANI

That's right! See how much sense
Elementism makes?

CIRRUS

But how could your gods love
something that freezes a village
in summer and kills a father?

Tori silently looks back and smirks at Avani. Avani sees the smirk, ignores it and answers directly to Cirrus.

AVANI

If they don't love it, who will?

Tori's smirk disappears and she suddenly looks deep in thought. Naur's words snap her out of it.

NAUR

Its friends will. That is all that is needed.

TORI

Yeah. Yeah.

Cirrus suddenly halts. SNIFFS.

CIRRUS

Hold it.

TORI

What?

CIRRUS

There's something outside the air bubble. Everyone hush.

Cirrus holds her hands flat and pushes down.

A light, airy WHUMP jostles some snowflakes on the top layer of snow around them. AMBIENT FOREST SOUNDS become audible.

Naur stops melting the snow. Cirrus points to her left.

Between the pines some 30-odd feet away walks a furry white-and-gold deer creature, 7' tall at the shoulder. Snow falls softly around it. This is the Winterking's true form.

He resembles a shaggy Irish Elk with a long tail. Icicles dangle from his thick fur and improbably huge antlers. He walks atop the snow as if it were hard ground.

A few winter wrens flutter down and perch on his antlers.

The party watches. None of them move. Naur closes his eyes.

The Winterking stops. Turns his head.

His eyes are solid pale blue.

AETHER VIEW

Pale blue swirls billow out of him like breath in winter. The air is alive with the swirls.

NORMAL VIEW

Naur opens his eyes, GULPS, and takes a testing step forward.

The Winterking SNORTS and the snow under him POOFS up into an obscuring cloud. The wrens fly away.

Naur holds out his hand.

NAUR

Do not worry. We are friends.

The snow settles. Nothing's there.

The Winterking (child) peeks out from behind a tree. His eyes are as soft and harmless as his voice.

WINTERKING

Cold.. deep, ending cold...

Cirrus covers her mouth. Tori and Avani merely stare.

Naur pushes through the snow. It melts and STEAMS around him, making him cringe. Cirrus reaches for him, but Tori holds Cirrus's arm and shakes her head.

NAUR

You must be frightened. You came here to hide, yes? I know that feeling. You can trust us.

Snowflakes fall out of the Winterking's visible breath.

WINTERKING

It is not winter cold. Go away. Please. The cold will kill you.

Naur stops.

A blinding BLIZZARD suddenly rushes down the mountain,
SHAKING the pines.

The blizzard BLASTS the whole party. Cirrus faces away from
the wind and holds her arms out --

She forms an air bubble around Naur, the girls and herself,
visible only by the snow surging around its curved non-
surface.

A dark shape FLIES down the mountain --

A blue-on-white hand grasps a blue-on-white fist over the
zipped front of a flight jacket --

And a jacketed elbow COLLIDES with the back of Cirrus's head.

Cirrus lurches forward and her eyes roll back. Instant
knockout.

Both the air bubble and Cirrus collapse.

The Winterking BOUNDS away. The snow-packed wind blows Naur's
cloak over his face as he reaches out to him.

NAUR

Wait!

Tori shields her face with her arm and shields Avani with her
stance. Both girls silently react at the sight of:

LEVANTER, standing over Cirrus and rubbing his elbow. The
driving snow quickly accumulates on his jacket.

LEVANTER

Her head's gotten harder. Which
of you has been filling it with
useless hope?

Naur lifts his hood.

Cirrus lies face-down in the deep snow.

Naur bares his teeth, nothing but canines and sharp molars.

Naur rears back a claw --

Levanter lifts an arm and the entire blizzard turns 90 degrees and narrows directly into Naur, BLASTING him with ROARING wind and snow.

Naur SLAMS into a tree and sinks completely into the deep snow, which rapidly piles up over him.

Tori UNZIPS her jacket and draws her knife. Levanter turns and BATS her hand away with a backhand fist --

The knife flies out and sinks in the snow.

Avani thrusts her ingot out, but Levanter grabs her wrist and TWISTS it. The ingot slides right off her hand by the handle.

Tori PUNCHES Levanter in the jaw. He grabs her throat and squeezes. Tori digs her nails into his sleeve to no effect.

LEVANTER (CONT'D)

Don't rush, girls. It's
worthless to kill you out here.

Levanter SHOOTS out of the snow, holding Tori and Avani tight. Tori holds his forearm tighter.

AVANI

Naur! *Naur!*

Steam rises from a dip in the snow around the tree. No other movement is apparent.

INT. LEVANTER'S CAVE - DAY

Levanter flies through a cave entrance, through a short tunnel --

And harshly DROPS Tori and Avani on a cave floor by a campfire. Tori rubs her throat and COUGHS HARSHLY.

Levanter dusts his hands. The inner room of cave is little more than a hole, twenty feet wide with a tunnel at the top of a sheer fifteen-foot wall.

LEVANTER

Welcome. You're not leaving.

AVANI

Levanter, wasn't it? Why are you here?

LEVANTER

That's a very deep question, young lady. They say to live is to suffer. I'm here for that.

Tori gets to her feet, JUMPS over the fire --

Levanter flicks his wrist and a wind gust SLAMS her against a cave wall.

Avani balls her fists and stalks toward Levanter.

LEVANTER (CONT'D)

Both of you sit quietly or I'll collapse your lungs before you learn a thing.

Avani quickly sits.

Levanter sits by the fire opposite her. Tori grudgingly walks to Avani and sits beside her.

LEVANTER (CONT'D)

You must have noticed the snow. I did too, as I searched for somewhere to make my next move.

TORI

Which is what?

LEVANTER

Whatever I like. My task is to abuse the people of Dorn until they adopt elementalism for self-defense. When I saw that snow above a little village, well, my task was clear. For the past week I've layered it softly. All it needs is an air bomb, and...

Tori and Avani understand.

TORI

You sick freak.

AVANI

The daemon. Is he with you?

LEVANTER

(uproarious laughter)
I *wish!* With *him* under control,
the Sunthief could beat the
others in an instant!

Tori and Avani exchange glances.

AVANI

What?

LEVANTER

You don't know anything, do you?

EXT. SNOWY MOUNTAIN - DAY

Naur lies still at the bottom of a pine tree. The deep snow
closest to him has melted into a shiny-sided bowl.

Naur stirs. Blinks.

The child Winterking stands on the snow. He looks sad.

WINTERKING

A deep, ending cold. A strange
un-winter I felt to the south. I
searched for it. It was gone. I
stopped here, to think.

Naur holds his head. Shakes it.

NAUR

What is your name?

WINTERKING

You do not hate?

NAUR

No, no, not at all.

The Winterking smiles blankly.

WINTERKING

Then, Winterking. Ones who hate,
call me Death.

NAUR

(profound pause)
Are you Death?

WINTERKING

Sometimes.
(turns head)
Perhaps soon. The wind tiger.

Naur GASPS.

Naur's claws STEAM and HISS through the snow. He uncovers
Cirrus (wind tiger), looking bluer than normal.

Naur turns her over and flattens his hands on her stomach and
sternum. The Winterking watches.

WINTERKING

You are warm. She will live, if
you want.

NAUR

My other friends, the humans,
will they?

WINTERKING

If you want.

INT. LEVANter'S CAVE - DAY

Levanter leans his elbows on his knees and tents his fingers.
The fire lights him ominously.

LEVANTER

The Four Beasts of the Nexus
each strive for the same prize.
When the time comes, they will
present proof of their merit,
and only one will be chosen.

Tori still looks on-guard.

TORI
Chosen for what?

LEVANTER
If I told you everything, you'd
have nothing to agonize over.
But here's something to chew on:
both of you are meritorious for
your respective Beasts.

Levanter stands and CRACKS his knuckles.

LEVANTER (CONT'D)
Now if you'll excuse me, I have
an avalanche to make.

AVANI
What about us?

LEVANTER
You will starve to death, or
possibly freeze first. I will
then deliver your shriveled
bodies to your owners as a
warning not to toy with the
Beast of Air. Unless you want to
try fighting me?

TORI
No, I'm good.

Levanter grins sharply.

He FLIES up and out the inaccessible entrance in a WHIRLWIND
that puts out the fire.

It's dark. Tori SPITS at the former fire. Avani bows her head
and touches the cave floor.

TORI (CONT'D)
Jagoff.

EXT. SNOWY MOUNTAIN - DAY

Levanter SHOOTS out of a cave high up the mountain.

Air SWIRLS around his hand, then over his palm, packing tighter and tighter. It grows white and the diameter of a quarter.

Levanter hovers in midair, takes a stance like a baseball pitcher and HURLS the tiny ball.

It flies at bullet speed into the snow.

A VERY LOUD BANG shakes a giant swath of snow completely loose from the mountainside.

More snow follows. Nothing holds back the HUGE AVALANCE.

The RUMBLE of the avalanche reaches Naur's ear-holes.

He and the Winterking look up the mountain. Cirrus's colors are healthy again but she's still knocked out.

WINTERKING

So it goes.

The avalanche picks up speed, SNAPPING down trees.

Naur tenses his claws.

NAUR

Stand back.

WINTERKING

Why?

Naur grits his teeth --

The avalanche barrels down --

Naur THRUSTS out his claws --

A HEAT SHIMMER collides with the avalanche. Over a length of about ten feet, the affected snow melts into water and HISSES into steam, leaving Naur, Cirrus and the Winterking at the edge of a patch of dry ground.

WINTERKING (CONT'D)

Oh.

The avalanche continues to either side of the patch.

EXT. SNOWY VILLAGE - DAY

Oldman stares up at the avalanche with some other VILLAGERS.

Some of the villagers PANIC and run away. Klauser runs by in the background. Eric clings to Oldman's leg.

EXT. SNOWY MOUNTAIN - DAY

Naur turns as if hauling a tremendous weight --

Points his arms at the avalanche halves --

Which simultaneously MELT and ERUPT into steam --

EXT. SNOWY VILLAGE - DAY

The heat of which WHOOSHES through the village.

Oldman stands still as the hot wind MELTS much of the snow in sight into shiny clumps. Eric lets him go, unzips his jacket, throws off his cap and fans himself, PANTING comically.

EXT. SNOWY MOUNTAIN - DAY

Naur breathes slowly and lets his arms drop. The Winterking looks up.

Levanter hovers far above them, scowling. Another air bomb tightens in his hand and he HURLS it off-screen.

SNOWY VALLEY

It flies toward the peak of the valley's opposite, equally snow-covered mountain. A moment passes. A slightly delayed LOUD BANG causes another AVALANCHE to rumble down.

SNOWY MOUNTAIN

Naur gapes helplessly.

He falls to his knees by Cirrus and droops his head.

NAUR

No. It is too far.

The Winterking's eyes look sad.

His arm gently lifts. His hand makes a "stop" motion.

SNOWY VALLEY

The avalanche STOPS INSTANTLY.

SNOWY MOUNTAIN

Levanter looks utterly shocked.

The Winterking looks up at him, more disappointed than angry.

WINTERKING

The blizzards were *you*?

Levanter descends his hovering to a couple dozen feet overhead. Naur finally notices him.

LEVANTER

I don't understand. You're the ageless cold itself, you cause death all the time! Why stop me?

Cirrus GROANS, drawing Naur's attention back to her. The Winterking keeps his arm up.

WINTERKING

Not cause. Let.

The Winterking's slowly turns his hand palm-up.

WINTERKING (CONT'D)

I will let you, if you want.

He beckons.

SNOWY VALLEY

All the tonnage of snow in the halted avalanche RISES UP.

SNOWY MOUNTAIN

Levanter looks afraid for once. He SOARS straight up.

Down below, Cirrus wakes up. Naur holds her head.

CIRRUS (V.O.)
 (slurring)
 S'cold. D'Tori take my blanket?

SNOWY VALLEY

The titanic mass of snow FLIES up --
 Quickly gaining on Levanter.

LEVANTER
 No! No! Not yet! I'm not yet
 Beast of Air!

Levanter tenses up and BLASTS OFF with a SONIC BOOM --
 Which SHATTERS the snow mass into flakes.
 Snow falls softly on the valley.

SNOWY MOUNTAIN

The Winterking stares at the sky.
 Naur helps Cirrus to her feet. She's a bit wobbly.

CIRRUS (V.O.)
 Who's the kid?

NAUR
 Our friend. A new traveling
 companion. Yes?

WINTERKING
 I travel with everyone. For now
 I will return home.
 (points up mountain)
 The humans. If you want.

Naur looks where the Winterking pointed. Looks back down.
 The Winterking is gone.

INT. LEVANTER'S CAVE - DAY

Avani stands under the sheer drop and links her fingers together in a foothold.

Tori rubs her shoulder.

TORI

Okay, my eyes are adjusted now.
One more time.

Tori RUNS at Avani --

Naur enters from the dropoff, holding Avani's ingot. He summons a BRIGHT FIREBALL in his free hand after his words.

NAUR

Tori? Avani?

Avani squints and looks up. Tori COLLIDES with her.

EXT. SNOWY VILLAGE - DAY

Oldman, Eric and the villagers have assembled. The streets are almost free of snow and no one wears layers anymore. Oldman bows his head.

OLDMAN

We cannot thank you enough.
Please, at least stay the night.

Tori's jacket is tied around her waist. Avani scoops up some snow, which Cirrus (human) takes and holds against her hear. Naur, cloaked, mounts Klauser's saddle.

TORI

What do you guys think?

CIRRUS

We're magnets for trouble.
Better get going.

AVANI

We'll be fine, with Naur along.

Naur bashfully tugs his hood down.

NAUR

Y-yes, we should go. Farewell.

Eric runs out of the crowd, pushes past Tori and heads straight for Naur.

TORI

Hey!

Eric reaches up and hugs Naur's leg. It's all he can reach.

ERIC

Thank you for making the snow
beast go away. You're a really
cool monster.

Naur somehow looks redder. He looks back and forth between the boy and the crowd, takes hold of the saddle handlebars and moves Klauser away.

NAUR

Um, y-yes, thank you. Be safe.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAMP 4 - NIGHT

Avani touches her ingot to the ground.

The RUMBLING ground extends and flattens and bulges into a circle with tent-mounds and cube seats as seen before.

Naur puts his luggage down. Snow falls lightly.

He, the ladies, and Klauser notice it. Klauser tilts his head.

The sky above is perfectly clear. No flying objects.

TORI

It's too warm for more snow...

Snowflakes hit Naur's face and evaporate. He smiles.

FADE OUT