

**THE OFFICIAL NOVEL FOR THE  
RAKUNA OF PUYUH EMAS:  
ETERNAL STORM SOVEREIGN**



# PROLOGUE: BEFORE THE FIRST FEATHER FELL

The world did not begin with light.

It began with silence.

A silence so deep it had no edge. A silence that swallowed breath, thought, even the idea of time itself. It pressed upon nothingness like an unseen ocean, infinite and suffocating. Within that silence, no sky arched overhead, no rivers carved the land, no thunder dared yet to exist.

And then - movement.

It was slight, almost imperceptible, like a ripple through still water. But in a world without sound, without shape, it was everything. Out of silence stirred a will, nameless and vast. It had no body, yet it pressed against existence. It had no feather, no crown, no form, and so it became known in later whispers as Ka'Syara - the Featherless One.

It was not god, for gods gave form to balance.

It was not demon, for demons wore the faces of hunger and fire.

It was only rejection made flesh. The unchosen, the formless.

Where Ka'Syara drifted, silence grew heavier. Darkness thickened, folding upon itself until even void seemed to wither. Had there been rivers, they would have stopped. Had there been winds, they would have stilled. Lightning itself - pure, reckless child of storm - refused to dance in its presence. The world recoiled, unfinished, gasping for a rhythm that did not yet exist.

But existence has always hated emptiness. From the heart of silence rose defiance.

They came - the Pendekar Diraja, the First Stormwalkers. They were not mortals as the world knows mortals now. Their veins coursed with lightning; their bones hummed like struck bronze. When they exhaled, the wind carried their breath across horizons. When their feet touched the ground, mountains rose to meet them. They were not kings, nor gods, but something in between: architects of balance, guardians of the unshaped.

Against Ka'Syara, they did not march with swords alone. They carried ideas.

They spoke the first words into silence. With tongues of thunder, they carved promises into the void. They bound laws to lightning, so storms would never rage without reason. They wove vows into feathers, so every wing that rose would rise in oath. They hammered harmony into storm itself, so chaos could never again claim dominion.

This was the birth of the Storm Creed.

And when the Creed took breath, the silence shattered.

The first thunder roared across emptiness, carrying rhythm into the void. Lightning danced - awkward at first, then fierce, then joyful. Gold veins spread through stone, igniting mountains with inner fire. Rivers awoke, spilling laughter as they learned the shape of their own names. The air itself remembered how to move, and the world gasped its first true breath.

Ka'Syara screamed without voice, for silence was all it knew. But silence was broken, torn open by feather and flame, by oath and storm. And so the Featherless One was bound - cast screaming into the Worldroot Abyss, a pit so deep that even lightning, fearless and wild, refused to follow. There it sank, its presence sealed beneath roots that drank thunder itself, chained by words that even gods could not unmake.

The Pendekar stood, weary but unbroken, their storm-feathers still smoldering with victory. They had not slain the Featherless - chaos cannot be slain. They had only caged it, buried it, whispered it away. And believing themselves triumphant, they declared balance eternal.

And balance held.

For centuries uncounted, rivers remembered their songs. Forests grew wild but never faithless. Storms thundered, but with rhythm, not ruin. And the Pendekar faded into myth, their feathers scattered across ages, their Creed passed down in oaths and whispers.

But nothing buried stays silent.

Deep beneath the roots of the world, beyond the reach of thunder, Ka'Syara stirred. Rejection cannot forget. Silence does not forgive.

And one day, when the world grew too proud of its feathers, when the Creed cracked under the weight of time, the Featherless One would rise again.

And the storm would remember its first scream.

# THE BIRTH OF THE STORM HEIR

The night of his hatching was unlike any other recorded in the annals of Nur'Elkara.

Storms were no strangers to the highlands of Kelat Nur'Elkara. For centuries, thunder had rolled its fierce music over those jagged peaks, where clouds wrapped the mountains like shrouds of silver and rivers cut their way down to the valleys with eternal hunger. Yet that night, the storm did not come as it always did, with rhythm and measured fury. It came as a crown.

Lightning did not merely strike - it lingered. Forks of blue-white fire carved themselves into the heavens and did not fade, holding aloft a luminous canopy as if the sky itself had been forced to kneel. The air was so thick with charge that every stone hummed, every tree bowed, and even the rivers seemed to pause their roaring, waiting for something they could not name.

Beneath this canopy of fire, in a hollow carved by wind and rain, lay a single egg.

It was not the speckled brown of the common quail, nor even the pale ivory of rare breeds. Its shell glowed faintly from within, veins of molten gold threading across its curve like rivers of light imprisoned in porcelain. When the thunder rolled, the shell trembled. When lightning split the sky, the glow pulsed brighter, as though the egg itself was breathing with the storm.

The villagers who had gathered on the slopes of Kelat Nur'Elkara spoke in hushed tones, their voices stolen away by awe. These were hardy folk, used to storms and omens, but none had ever seen a storm behave as though it were guarding something. None had ever felt the rhythm of thunder bow itself to the silence around a single nest.

And then - cracks.

A fine line split the egg, jagged as a lightning bolt. Another followed, then another, until the glow inside blazed too bright to contain. With a sharp report, the shell broke apart in shards, scattering like sparks upon the earth.

From within rose a creature no eye had seen before.

He was small, as quails are, his body still damp from birth. Yet even in that fragile moment, his presence burned like prophecy. His down shimmered not with the plain hues of the earth, but with goldfire, as if sunlight itself had woven threads into his feathers. His eyes opened wide - not soft and helpless, but sharp, alive, twin shards of stormlight caught in a living form.

Thunder answered his first cry.

The heavens themselves seemed to roar in recognition, their sound rolling across mountain and valley alike. The villagers fell to their knees, some pressing foreheads to the ground, others lifting their arms to the sky. For in that cry, they heard not the frail voice of a hatchling, but the call of a sovereign yet to come.

They named him Rakuna Diraja - “the Crownfire of the Stormline.”

Whispers spread like wildfire through the slopes and valleys: that he was not hatched by earth alone, but by the decree of the sky. That the storm itself had chosen him, breathing its essence into his shell, crowning him with thunder before he had even taken his first step.

The old among them remembered the Creed of the Pendekar, the words that spoke of heirs marked by the sky, of feathers that would glow with the promise of flame, of eyes that would carry lightning itself. Some wept, knowing prophecy had walked into their midst. Others trembled, for prophecy was never born without a price.

But Rakuna did not know the weight of names.

He was no “boy,” no simple creature to be mistaken for one. He was quail - yet more than quail. His every feather shimmered with destiny, his every heartbeat throbbed with thunder. To watch him was to feel the storm lean closer, as though waiting for him to command it.

Beneath his down, unseen by mortal eyes, slept the Storm Mark-a sigil etched not upon flesh, but upon soul. It waited, coiled in silence, a secret only the heavens could read.

The villagers cradled him, but the sky kept its gaze fixed upon him. For in Rakuna’s first breath, prophecy had been rekindled.

He was not merely born.

He was declared.

The last heir of the golden bloodline, the flame of kings, the stormborne crest of Nur’Elkara.

And though he knew it not, his birth was the first toll of the bell that would summon chaos from the depths, and awaken Ka’Syara from silence.

# THE CREED OF FIVE WINGS

Deep in the heart of Istana Emas, where pillars of goldstone rose like frozen bolts of lightning, there lay a hall that no voice dared profane. Its floor was black obsidian, polished so perfectly that those who entered saw both heaven and earth reflected at their feet. At the chamber's center, carved into the stone by hands said to be older than kingdoms, burned a single oath - the unyielding bond of the Pendekar Diraja.

It was called the Creed of Five Wings.

They said the words had been spoken first by the Founders of Nur'Elkara when the Formless One stirred in the shadows of creation. The oath was not ink nor sound but lightning branded into rock, a script that glowed faintly whenever storms rolled above the capital. To read it was to feel the air thicken, the blood quicken, the heart remember something greater than itself.

And the words were these:

“When lightning strikes the crown, five wings rise against the storm.”

The villagers of Ranah Nur'Elkara recited it in prayer before harvests. Warriors spoke it before battle. Children whispered it before sleep, believing the five wings would spread above them to chase nightmares into the void. But within the marble bones of the Istana, the Creed was more than comfort. It was a covenant.

From this covenant rose the Five Pillars-chosen not by crown nor council, but by destiny's merciless hand. Each bore a flame no other could, a burden no other would.

## **Rakuna, the Crownfire Flame of Kings**

The stormborn heir, feathered in goldfire, whose eyes bore the lightning of the heavens. Though lineage declared him sovereign, Rakuna's greatness lay not in ruling from a throne, but in lifting others beside him. He was king, yes, but king of shoulders, not crown-one who bore the weight so that others might fly. His flame was the torch that lit all others, the heart that bound the Creed itself.

## **Aralata, the Heart of the Mountain**

From the redstone highlands of Merpatara came Aralata, whose body seemed hewn from living rock. His silence spoke louder than drums; his presence turned chaos to stillness. Where Rakuna was fire and vision, Aralata was fortress and earth. He planted his oath like roots and swore to be shield not only for the realm, but for every comrade who carried its weight. None could move him, for he was mountain incarnate.

## **Selindra, the Whisper of the Waves**

From the sapphire shoals where the sea sang against coral towers came Selindra. Priestess, healer, weaver of illusions-her voice calmed storms and her hands drew poison from wound and spirit alike. To follow her eyes was to see oceans deep enough to drown both grief and fury. Where others brandished sword or flame, she brought serenity-the tide that healed, the song that remembered, the wisdom that bound chaos into peace.

## **Kerrap, the Laughing Shadow**

The jungles of Syamarna birthed him, though no one could claim to have seen his first steps. He was wind, he was echo, he was the shadow between leaves that always seemed to laugh just beyond reach. Trickster and scout, hunter and spirit-mimic, Kerrap was freedom given form. To some he was reckless mischief, to others he was salvation-but all knew his mirth masked truths older than the roots of his forest. He was not shield nor sword, but the gust that turned defeat into survival.

## **Tarmak, the Ash Blade**

Once of the royal assassins, trained in silence and smoke, Tarmak was a ghost of shadows-until he renounced blood for redemption. His blade burned not with light but with dark flame, a power meant to sever corruption itself. Few trusted him, fewer loved him, yet none could deny his discipline, his unyielding mastery of self. Where he walked, silence followed, but in that silence lay the promise of deliverance. For though he was ash, from him rose fire anew.

Together, they were not five individuals, but five wings of a single crown.

They were storm and stone, tide and trickster, shadow and flame.

They were laughter in despair, fortress in ruin, light in exile, flame in storm.

And when thunder forgot its rhythm, when skies split and the Formless One stirred again in the dark, the Creed was their rallying cry:

Five wings, one storm.

Five flames, one crown.

Five souls, one oath eternal.

The Pendekar Diraja stood - not for throne, not for self, but for the realm of Nur'Elkara, that no silence would ever again swallow its light.



# THE WORLD OF GOLD AND STORM

Ranah Nur'Elkara was not merely a land.

It was a living hymn - a realm where storm and silence were threads in the same tapestry, woven into gold and shadow, blood and memory. The air itself breathed in rhythm with lightning; the rivers carried whispers of names lost before time was written; the mountains listened, and sometimes, they answered.

To walk its soil was to walk across verses of scripture - verses sung not in ink, but in thunder.

## Emas Nadija - The Golden City

At the heart of Nur'Elkara rose Emas Nadija, crown of the Diraja line. Its towers were carved of storm-veined marble, shot through with veins that glowed faintly whenever thunderclouds passed overhead. Streets gleamed with mosaics of goldleaf and obsidian, catching sunlight in the day and lightning-fire at night.

Markets bustled not with clamor but with rhythm - vendors sang their wares in lilting chants, each syllable carried like prayer. Children darted between archways draped with banners of quail-feather sigils, while elders sat beneath the high pavilions, reciting old epics that even the stones seemed to lean in to hear.

And always, the city sang.

The wind played its towers like flutes; the rain turned its courtyards into drums; and when storms came, the entire city shimmered as if cloaked in celestial armor.

## Khiratha'naar - The Sentient Jungle

Beyond the gilded plains lay Khiratha'naar, the living jungle where lightning spoke in the voices of beasts. Its canopy was a cathedral of green, its roots twisted into caverns where echoes grew flesh. Here, words were dangerous - for the trees remembered every syllable ever spoken, and repeated them back in thunderous mimicry.

Travelers swore that if you lingered too long, the forest would learn your name - and in stormlight, your name would call back to you in a tongue not your own. Quail-feather scouts whispered of creatures feathered with lightning, of serpents coiled around thunderbolts, of spirits that laughed like children but vanished like smoke.

Khiratha'naar was no wilderness.

It was a listener.

And it never forgot.

## **Luraktha'rim - The Cursed Barrens**

To the west sprawled the Luraktha'rim, a wasteland where mirages were not tricks of heat but revelations of truth. Here, the sky always seemed split in two - half blazing sun, half brooding storm. Sand rose like shattered glass, cutting the feet of those who dared walk it.

The curse was not the land, but the memory it revealed. Travelers who crossed the barrens often collapsed, undone by visions of their own forgotten sins. Entire caravans were said to vanish, consumed not by thirst but by guilt. Yet still, seekers came - pilgrims, warriors, even kings - for those who endured the barrens without breaking were said to emerge remade, their souls tempered as steel.

The Pendekar called it the anvil of truth. Others simply called it hell.

## **Meraga Sijara - The Crimson Valley**

Cut deep into the eastern highlands lay the valley of Meraga Sijara, its earth stained blood-red as though the mountains themselves had bled. Here, the Pendekar Diraja carved their storm sigils into both stone and flesh. Every rock bore ancient etchings of lightning-crowns, every scar upon a warrior's body was another line in the eternal scripture of survival.

When storms rolled through, the entire valley became a theater of fire and thunder, the carvings glowing as though the mountains remembered their makers. This was the crucible where oaths were born, where feathers were burned in initiation, where the weak either broke or became unbreakable.

It was said: "In Meraga Sijara, the sky learns your name, and the earth makes you prove it."

## **Aerath Kirana - The Sacred Waters**

But above all, the most haunting of all realms was Aerath Kirana, waterways so pure they did not reflect flesh but soul. Lakes shimmered not with blue, but with shifting hues of the heart: crimson for anger, silver for sorrow, gold for love, black for lies.

Priests and mystics journeyed to its shores to test their spirits. Lovers bathed there to bind their vows. Kings trembled to kneel at its banks, for the waters knew truth no crown could mask.

To gaze into Aerath Kirana was to confront the self.

Some returned with peace.

Others never returned at all.

## **The People of Nur'Elkara**

And binding all these lands together were its people - radiant, fierce, storm-souled. They wore storm-threaded garments woven with silken fibers that sparked faintly when struck by rain. Their speech carried the Kelate lilt, words rising and falling like the waves of a chant, every phrase soft as prayer yet sharp as lightning.

Their dances mimicked thunder, each step echoing storm rhythms, each spin a lightning arc across the earth. Their silences, too, carried weight - for in Nur'Elkara, silence was never empty. Silence was thunder waiting to be born.

They did not see storm as wrath, but as scripture.

Balance was their creed.

And balance was life.

# **THE STORM MARK**

The Storm Mark was never born of hammer or chisel.

It was never drawn upon scroll nor painted upon wall.

It was remembered.

Etched into the marrow of the skies, woven into the thunder's first cry, the Mark lingered - unseen by common eyes, but always present, like a shadow of lightning waiting to strike. It was less a symbol, more a memory of creation itself, drifting between silence and storm until the heavens deemed an heir worthy.

## **The Passive Crest - Feathervolt at Rest**

In its slumbering form, the Storm Mark gleamed with quiet majesty. A single feather, curved like a flame rising against wind, lay carved in spirals of molten gold. Around it circled rings of calm - wind captured, lightning held in restraint, a storm asleep but not extinguished.

It appeared upon palace banners, fluttering like a whisper against tempest skies. It adorned coins that bore not kings but storms. It was etched into arches, into armor, into sacred chalices raised during oaths. To the people of Nur'Elkara, the feather was not just a crest - it was reassurance.

It said:

“The storm sleeps, but it watches.”

## **The Active Crest - Surge of Nur'Halilintar**

But when the heir awakened the true blood of the Stormline, the Mark no longer whispered.

It roared.

The spiral unraveled into a vortex, wings unfurling in streaks of gold and white-blue flame, each feather a shard of living lightning. From its heart burned the Storm Eye, a radiant orb that pulsed like the breath of the sky itself. Bolts lashed outward, like dragons of pure light tearing free of chains, scorching the heavens with judgment.

This was the Surge of Nur'Halilintar - not a crest, but a living tempest, a declaration that the storm had chosen its master.

And yet, to bear it was agony. The air itself pressed down like mountains, voices of every storm since creation whispering in chorus. Only one soul could withstand it - the true heir.

## **Judgment of the False**

Stormseers whispered the warning:

“The heavens know their heir. The sky bows for no imposter.”

For those who dared claim the Mark falsely, it did not remain silent. It screamed. Winds tore open the bones of liars; gales hollowed their souls until nothing but ash and echo remained. Thrones built on deceit shattered beneath it, armies dissolved into dust when banners of false claimants were unfurled.

It was not loyalty to blood alone that the Mark demanded - it was loyalty to balance, to harmony itself. Even the golden line of the Diraja could be abandoned if arrogance soured its spirit.

## **The Awaiting Storm**

And so, for generations, the Mark slept. It flickered faintly above the Throne of Sky Echoes, glowing only when a rightful heir approached - yet even then, its light was muted, as though waiting.

Waiting for more than a king.

Waiting for more than a line of blood.

Waiting for one who would not just inherit storms - but become them.

And in the age when thunder forgot its rhythm, in the time when Ka'Syara's whisper rose again, the Storm Mark stirred once more, seeking the soul that could bear its true flame.

It awaited the one hatched beneath lightning, feather of mercy in one wing, thunder of judgment in the other.

It awaited Rakuna Diraja.

# First Ascension - Asal Rakuna / Sarang Cahaya (Nest of Light)

“From the shell, hope cracked open.”

The egg had not lain there for long in the talekeepers’ telling-only long enough for the rain to settle and the moss to learn the rhythm of the new storm-but when it broke, the world leaned in. It cracked with a sound like distant thunder folded into a bird’s breath, a small fracture that became a song. Down that was not gray nor plain brown, but threaded with an impossible gold, spilled into palm and peat. Tiny claws found damp earth. Tiny beak sniffed a sky that still smelled of lightning.

They called him Rakuna before they could speak his other names-before the elders had time to thread lineage and omen into the syllables. They called him because there was nothing else to call; names were for things that sat easy in a mouth. He did not sit easy. He shimmered. He sneezed sparks. He peered up at the clean cut of the world with eyes like struck flint.

Rain kept talking to the leaves. The pool waited as if it had been expecting him. It was not a mere hollow of water but a bowl of raw beginning, shaped by hands older than men and polished again and again by the touch of moonlight. The elders called it Sarang Cahaya-the Nest of Light-and mothers brought newborns here to be given the quiet blessing of water that remembered stars.

Rakuna trembled at the edge, down sticky with sea-salt and egg-heat. He tottered on legs that would one day learn to carry thunder. Around him, the village circled in a low hum: whispers braided with ritual, oil lamps swinging, the steady one-two of a drum that spoke of passage. A child reached out a grubby hand and froze; hands knew to still themselves when the sacred is awake.

When he dipped his beak-only the tip, because all learning begins with a cautious taste-the pool held no glassy portrait to return to him. No mirror of shape and feather and curious bright eyes. Instead the surface breathed, shivered, and offered up a darkness that was not empty but full of weather: long-forgotten rains, the hush of drowned forests, the memory of a first thunder.

Rakuna flinched. He expected a reflection. All hatchlings expect to find themselves multiplied by water. To not be seen is to be denied by the world.

A tremor moved through him-a small, private earthquake. He pecked again, this time harder, until the water rippled and showed something like movement beneath the skin of glass. Not his pale belly or his stubby wings. Not even his spark-streaked down. It showed him a corridor of small, astonished failures: the times he had pecked the wrong grain, the times he had lost a race with a crab and laughed too loudly, the whisper of a selfishness that clung like burrs. It showed the hunger that lived below his ribs, the hunger that might, if unguarded, eat others’ light.

For a heartbeat he thought the pool judged him. He wanted to bolt-back to brush and seed and the sort of small, safe laughter that belonged to barns and shallow puddles. Instead something in him softened. He let himself be seen by the terrible, honest thing that was the water.

It was a small weeping. Hatchling tears, salt and new, not yet learned for ornament. They fell on feather, on beak, into a pool that had swallowed storms and spat legends. The ripples took his shame and shaped them into a voice that was not a human voice but the memory of rain on stone.

“To lead,” the water said (and it was as much the water as the codex of old that spoke), “you must first be unmasked.”

The sound was a whisper that did what thunder does when it lowers itself into a child’s ear: it rearranged belief. Rakuna’s trembling stillness grew into something like attention. Under the down at his throat, something settled—a small cold pressure, a seed of storm—so slight a thing that the midwife who held him only noticed because her own heart caught. She hummed a song the women had been singing since before the temples had roofs, and those who heard it said later that the air tasted different after that hum. Salt and ash braided with warm, alive gold.

He did not understand the word “unmask” the way the elders would one day explain it in the arc of scripture. He only understood the loosening. He squirmed free of the midwife’s palm and waddled to the water’s edge again, this time without the frantic desire for his shape returned. He searched the surface not to know what he looked like but to know what he might become.

The pool obliged—not with spectacle but with a small test, as old things do. The water pulled at him with a cold kindness, tugging his down until a single feather loosened and floated free. It was ordinary and holy, and when it settled on the mirror of the nest it opened like a map. In the pattern of its barbs there were shapes that hummed with memory: a broken crown, a curled feather, lines like lightning etched fine. The midwife took it and draped it over his tiny shoulder like a promise.

Elder Selin, whose hands had once smoothed the robes of a king and who had seen storms breed oracles and scoundrels alike, stepped forward. “Marked,” she said, and her voice made no claim—markings were not the same as coronation. They were questions. “Marked, perhaps, but not chosen until he learns the asking.”

So the nest of light did not crown him. It did something stranger and more difficult. It opened him. It left before him a corridor full of mirrors that were not mirrors at all, but doors: to humility, to laughter that is given and not pretense, to the small terrible mercy of admitting error.

Outside the ring of watchers, a gull cried, and for a moment the world held its breath—because rites make the air thin; the village tasted the salt of a beginning and the scent of lightning that had not yet made its verdict.

That night Rakuna slept with the feather across his breast. Dreams came—dry, feathered visions of other quails, enormous and crowned, whirling in looped storms; of a wide-arched

bridge made of rain; of a voice older than the tide saying one single, patient thing: unmask, then lead.

When morning bled into the day, the pool's light had dimmed; but the memory had been cast like netting over the child. He would carry the lesson outward in the awkward language of living. He would tumble, he would stumble, he would be cruel and kind and ridiculous and brave in ways that would make the elders laugh and sigh in equal measure. And whenever he came back to still water thereafter-after the races, after the small cruelties forgiven, after the nights of quiet courage-the pool would not give him his face. It would give him something harder and truer: the sound of his own voice when it was honest.

(Marginalia: Glyph fragment -  $\text{E}^{\text{L}}\text{T}$  - translated on the Codex margin as "Nest of Light: the mirror that asks and does not answer.")

Thus began the first of twelve: not with a triumphal banner nor a blade, but with a small, trembling thing named Rakuna who learned, in the way only the truly great learn, that the first task of power is to stand revealed and keep walking.

## **Second Ascension - Telaga Kembar (Twin Wells) / Laughter of Shadows**

“Only by knowing his reflection could Rakuna know his worth.”

The path to the second ascension did not rise like mountain steps, nor fall like a valley’s throat. It sloped sideways, into a seam of stone where the world folded itself into shadow and song. The villagers of Nur’Elkara called it Telaga Kembar-the Twin Wells-not for the waters alone, but for the twin truths they demanded of any who entered: to see oneself as one is, and to see oneself as one pretends to be.

Rakuna arrived at dusk, his wings not yet wide enough to ride the upper drafts of sky, his steps uncertain but sharpened by the whisper of the first trial. The pool of beginnings had unmasked him; the twin wells would double him.

The caves yawned open with the damp breath of limestone and old echoes. Two pools lay side by side, separated by only a ribbon of obsidian rock. Their waters pulsed with different moods: one still as glass, patient and watchful; the other restless, rippling though no wind touched it.

“Step in,” said the guide-a woman with hair plaited into ropes that glittered like wet stone. She bore no staff, no crown, only a lantern carved in the shape of a laughing face. “Both waters are you. Both waters are not you. Swim, and you will know which is which.”

Rakuna did not question. Questions often cluttered beginnings. He lowered himself into the first pool-the quiet one, its surface cold, deep, so still that it swallowed his breath. At once the water showed him himself: not the hatchling, not the trembling child at the Nest of Light, but a warrior crowned in gold-fire plumage, blade flashing with stormlight. His chest swelled; for an instant, he basked. But the longer he gazed, the more the reflection stiffened. The eyes grew narrow, cruel, unblinking. The crown bent not with mercy, but with weight. He saw his future self seated high on a throne, but his people knelt too low, shadows bent too deep, their laughter stilled.

Rakuna broke the surface, gasping. The guide said nothing. She only nodded to the second pool.

This one was different. The moment he slipped in, the waters erupted into ripples of light and shadow. They tugged at his wings, pulled at his breath, and then showed him not a crown, not a king, but a child still chasing winds. He saw himself tripping, stumbling, mocked by others. He saw cowardice: moments where he had hidden instead of speaking, where he had avoided the call of courage. He saw his own hands, too small, trembling, dropping the very feather the Nest of Light had given him.

Rakuna’s first instinct was shame. His second was anger. His third-after his chest cracked with the ache of holding too much-was laughter. A sharp, ridiculous sound burst from him, echoing against the cave walls.

Because it was true. He was awkward. He was afraid. He was unready. And in that truth, there was freedom. His mirrored self laughed with him, not at him. In that echo, he heard his people-not kneeling in silence, but roaring in festival joy, their voices filling caverns with thunder that was not destructive but alive.

That night, the caves transformed. Lanterns were lit, drums were carried in, and the cavern became a festival hall. Not just for Rakuna, but for anyone who sought refuge in laughter. Shadows danced across stalactites like trickster gods; voices sang folk songs older than the first Pendekar. Rakuna, cloaked in nothing more than a ragged shawl borrowed from a villager, danced among them. He shared roasted grain, clapped with children, and for once, was no marked child, no heir of whispers, no storm-bearer. He was simply one of them.

And in that simplicity, he learned the second lesson:

A king who cannot laugh with his people is already a tyrant.

When dawn crawled into the cave, the waters stilled. On the obsidian stone that divided the pools, words appeared, etched not by hand but by stormlight:

“Know thy shadow. Mock it. Dance with it. Only then may the crown rest light upon thy head.”

Rakuna touched the inscription. His fingers trembled-not from fear, but from a new weight: the knowledge that his people’s joy must be his compass, not his chains.

The guide extinguished her lantern, and her hair unraveled like rain. She bowed. “The shadow has laughed with you. You are ready for the third ascension.”

Rakuna left Telaga Kembar with a new fire in his chest-not the fire of crowns or blades, but the fire of laughter shared in darkness. And the echoes of that laughter followed him long after, like thunder that refused to fade.

# Third Ascension - Batu Langit (Sky Rock) / Trial of Beasts

“He stood upon stone, yet spoke to the skies.”

The road to the third ascension was not paved by men, nor guided by stars. It was swallowed in green, where roots bound the world tighter than iron, and voices whispered in thunder not from heavens but from trunks and vines.

Khiratha'naar.

The sentient jungle.

Here, silence was a lie; every breath was watched, every step weighed. To enter was to trespass into a realm where beasts were not animals but tongues of the storm itself. Some who entered were never seen again, their names devoured by leaves and their bones ground into soil. But those who returned-those few-were no longer mortals. They were marked.

Rakuna came barefoot, carrying nothing but the feather of balance from the twin wells and the whisper of waters in his heart. At the jungle's threshold, a stone rose from earth-Batu Langit, the Sky Rock. Smooth as if carved by divine hands, its top gleamed with veins of storm-light, pulsing faintly like a heart. The elders said the first Pendekar had stood there when thunder kissed his brow.

Rakuna climbed it at dawn. His shadow stretched long across the jungle floor, trembling against a horizon already alive with rustling and growls. He raised his small wings, still too soft to catch true sky, and cried-not in fear, but in defiance:

“I WILL FLY.”

The jungle answered.

Eyes opened. Hundreds. Gold, blue, crimson, each one glowing like caged lightning. The branches swayed though no wind touched them, and from the thickets emerged the first beast: a panther, its fur striped with silver veins, its gaze deep as storm clouds. It did not roar. It spoke.

“Child of shell and storm,” it rumbled, voice like stones grinding, “what is flight to you?”

Rakuna clenched his fists. His chest rose, his breath ragged. “Freedom.”

The panther's eyes narrowed. “Wrong. Freedom without burden is chaos. Return when you know.” It melted into vines.

Another came: a horned stag, antlers sparking with faint arcs of lightning. It stamped its hoof, shaking the roots beneath Batu Langit.

“What is a king to you?”

Rakuna hesitated. He remembered the cruel face in the first pool, the tyrant in his reflection. His jaw tightened. “Not throne, not crown. A king lifts others.”

The stag bowed its head once, then dissolved into mist.

The beasts kept coming. Wolves whose howls rattled marrow. Eagles with wings of smoke and storm. Each spoke not in riddles of cleverness but riddles of spirit. Each tested not Rakuna’s wit, but his marrow, his truth.

Then came the serpent.

It slithered across Batu Langit in silence, scales shining like wet emerald fire. Its eyes locked onto Rakuna, glowing with venomous promise. He had no weapon, only bare hands. He braced himself, heart thundering.

The strike was swift. Fangs pierced his wing. Pain lanced like molten iron through his veins. His knees buckled, his breath tore from him, the jungle spinning. His body screamed to crush it, to tear it apart, to silence the agony with death.

But instead, he opened his palm.

The serpent, expecting fury, froze mid-coil. Its venom burned him still, but he held it gently, refusing hate.

“Strike if you must,” he whispered, trembling, “but I will not answer life with death.”

The jungle hushed. Leaves stilled. The ever-present hum of insects faltered. Even the air-always thick, always restless-paused, waiting.

And then, something shifted.

The serpent’s fangs withdrew. Its eyes softened into pools of light, ancient and sorrowful. It wound itself around his arm, no longer a predator but a band of living emerald, its venom transmuted into warmth. The wound sealed, leaving not scar but mark: a spiral of storm etched into his flesh.

The jungle exhaled.

Thunder rolled without lightning. Trees bowed though no wind pushed them. The beasts-all eyes, all voices-spoke as one, their words echoing like scripture:

“Mercy is not weakness. Mercy is dominion.”

Rakuna stood upon Batu Langit, his wing still trembling, but his spirit unbroken. The beasts bowed, fading back into shadows, their gazes lingering as if to mark him not as intruder but as heir.

And in that silence, prophecy was born.

It was said the wind itself stopped that day, pausing in reverence. And though no tongue spoke it aloud, the jungle had written his name into its roots:

Rakuna Diraja, the one who would fly not by wing alone, but by mercy carried upon storm.

When he stepped down from Batu Langit, the serpent still coiled his arm, its gaze steady, a reminder of the lesson burned into his blood.

The Trial of Beasts was done.

# Fourth Ascension - Lingkaran Ujian (Circle of Trial) / Flame of Flesh

“Still waters demand movement from within.”

The path to the fourth ascension led Rakuna to the lake that had no waves.

Its surface was so calm that sky and water fused into one mirror, flawless, untouchable. The elders called it Lingkaran Ujian - the Circle of Trial. No bird drank from it, no beast dared swim it. They said the water was not water at all, but silence made liquid, waiting to drown those who did not know themselves.

Rakuna approached barefoot, wings bruised from the jungle, serpent-mark still glowing faint upon his arm. He gazed into the lake and saw no boy, no beast, no king - only emptiness. His heart trembled. The silence mocked him.

So he leapt in.

Day after day, he swam. Spinning. Flapping. Thrashing. Each movement broke the surface, but the lake closed instantly, swallowing effort like dust. He pushed until his lungs burned, until his body screamed. But the waters gave nothing.

No voice. No ripple. No reward.

The priests of Meraga Sijara watched from the crimson cliffs above. They wore robes stitched with veins of ember, their eyes marked with ash. To them, this was only the beginning. For the lake was but canvas; the true trial was fire.

On the seventh night, when moons crowned the horizon red, they descended with blades of obsidian and bowls of flame. Rakuna, still shivering from the waters, was seized and bound across the Stormstone altar. His chest heaved. His voice cracked.

“What more must I do?”

The eldest priest raised his blade, its edge glowing with molten heat.

“To move the still waters,” he intoned, “you must burn within.”

The blade descended.

Fire kissed skin. Lines were carved into him - not random cuts, but living sigils, the ancient storm-script of Nur'Elkara. They seared into vein and marrow, branding him not as victim but as vessel. His cries shattered the night, but not with despair - with raw, unchained storm.

Each stroke of flame cut deeper than flesh. Each mark carried weight: the burden of kingship, the duty of storm, the oath of mercy. Pain became language. Agony became scripture.

By the final cut, his body smoked with steam, blood mingled with fire. His reflection in the lake below trembled, no longer empty. From beneath the surface, thunder stirred. Ripples spread where none had dared before.

And then it came.

A rumble, deep, hidden, like the growl of a beast beneath the waters. The stillness broke. A storm formed under the lake, unseen yet felt, a pressure rising like lungs filling before a roar. The priests stepped back, bowing, their chants swallowed by the sound of cracking silence.

Rakuna stood, shaking, skin ablaze with storm-sigils glowing gold and crimson. His eyes lifted to the heavens, no longer pleading but burning. He had not conquered the lake, nor silenced its mockery. He had awakened it.

Thunder lived within him now.

From that night forth, his every heartbeat carried its echo.

# **Fifth Ascension - Persaudaraan Dingin (Brotherhood of Cold) / Silence of Storms**

“Those without flames find fire in others.”

The journey north carried Rakuna where the world no longer breathed warmth.

Mountains sharpened into spears of ice. Valleys froze into mirrors of death. The air itself cut like glass, and the sun was a pale ghost drifting without heat. Here lay the Persaudaraan Dingin - the Brotherhood of Cold - where no fire survived except the one carried within.

At first, Rakuna staggered through the snow, his storm-sigils dim beneath frost. His breath turned to smoke, his wings stiff with ice. He was not alone, however. Shadows waddled from the glaciers - penguins cloaked in feathers thick as armor, seals with eyes like obsidian pearls, polar beasts that walked the ice as if it were blood.

They did not welcome him with words, for these lands had no language but motion. They slid across frozen rivers, dove with grace into cracks of black water, and spun in wild games of rhythm. They laughed without sound - laughter in leaps, in splashes, in balance.

Rakuna tried to follow. At first, he slipped, crashed, stumbled. His pride raged. But the creatures did not mock him. They circled him, nudged him, guided him until his feet no longer fought the ice, but moved with it. He learned to glide, not with speed, but with rhythm. To flow with the world's silence, rather than shatter it.

And yet, beneath that frozen peace, another storm lurked.

For the ice was not empty. It remembered sins.

One night, beneath the northern auroras - rivers of green flame coiling across the sky - Rakuna saw them. Shadows rose from the frost, shaped like himself. Twelve figures, each one heavier, darker, sharper. One snarled with arrogance. One whispered envy. One laughed with scorn. They circled him as wolves, each carrying the face he once wore.

He swung his wings, his claws, his storm-lit eyes - but every blow struck emptiness. The phantoms did not fight back. They hunted. They hounded. They breathed his own sins into his ear:

“You will fall, as all kings fall.”

“You crave crown more than justice.”

“You will drown in your vanity.”

Rakuna's storm raged. He struck. He screamed. He clawed until his body bled across the snow. Yet the shadows multiplied. The more he fought, the stronger they grew.

At last, broken and trembling, Rakuna collapsed upon the ice. His chest heaved, but no fire rose. The storm within him seemed to die.

And then - silence.

For the first time, he did not fight. He did not roar. He did not beg the heavens to speak. He knelt. He closed his eyes. He let the cold pierce him, surround him, swallow him. He let the ghosts circle. He let them breathe their venom into his bones.

And in silence... they faded.

The storm that once clawed his heart grew still. Not gone - but deeper. Quieter. The thunder within him no longer demanded to be heard. It waited, patient, like a mountain holding back an avalanche.

The auroras shimmered above him, and the frost-beasts bowed their heads. They, too, had known: silence is not weakness. Silence is storm restrained.

Rakuna rose with no boast, no shout. His enemies had not been slain. They had been accepted. His sins were his own - and still, he walked forward.

From then on, when his wings beat, they carried the hush of snow before a blizzard.

A silence so heavy it could drown the world.

# **Sixth Ascension - Lumba Irama (Race of Flow) / Burden of Choice**

“The ocean does not reward rage - only rhythm.”

The sea opened before him like an endless drum.

Rakuna stood where land drowned into horizon, where waves rolled in silver belts, each one crashing as if it carried the pulse of the earth. The air was heavy with salt and song - a place where every tide was a heartbeat, every spray a whisper. Here began the Lumba Irama - the Race of Flow.

From beneath the foam, they came.

Dolphins. Sleek, radiant, their bodies like living blades of water. They leapt as though mocking the sky, curved as if sculpted by joy itself. Without word or signal, they challenged him.

Rakuna spread his wings, the storm-marks across his flesh sparking faint light. He hurled himself into the sea, thrashing forward with all the rage that had carried him through jungle, flame, and frost. He struck the water like a hammer, beating against it, forcing speed, commanding power.

But always - he lost.

The dolphins slipped past, laughing in arcs of liquid silver, cutting the currents with effortless ease. He clawed at the water, but it yielded nothing. He spat thunder, but the waves swallowed it whole. His storm was drowned by rhythm.

Again and again, he raged. Again and again, he fell behind.

Until his strength broke. Until he floated, gasping, no longer fighting.

It was then he felt it.

Not the roar of storm. Not the silence of frost. But the pulse of the ocean itself. The tide pulled not against him but with him, a rhythm beneath the skin of the world. The dolphins did not conquer the waves; they became them. They curved as the water curved. They rose as the water rose. They fell as it fell.

Rakuna closed his eyes. He stopped thrashing.

And then - he moved.

Not with rage, not with force, but with rhythm. His body no longer fought the water. It joined it. His wings cut arcs that bent with the tide, his strokes a mirror of the sea's own breath. He glided, surged, spun.

This time, he did not lose. Not because he won, but because there was no race left to lose.

The dolphins bowed their heads and vanished beneath the depths. The lesson was sealed: the ocean does not reward rage - only rhythm.

But the sea was only the beginning.

For beyond the coast, the mountains rose: the Dua Langit - the Fork of Two Skies. Twin peaks split the heavens, sharp as twin blades, each one crowned in stormlight.

The first peak sang of throne - a crown forged of thunder, a promise of dominion.

The second peak whispered of exile - a flight into solitude, where no chain nor duty bound his wings.

Two paths. Two skies. One choice.

Rakuna climbed to the fork, his body still dripping with salt. The heavens themselves waited, their silence heavier than thunder. The choice pressed upon him until his bones screamed. Throne or exile. King or wanderer. Crown or nothing.

And Rakuna - laughed.

He laughed at the tyranny of choice, at the arrogance of fate itself. With wings still burning from the sea's rhythm, he turned from both peaks. He drove his claws into the mountain wall and began to carve.

Stone shattered beneath him. Sparks leapt with each strike. He carved not up nor down, but through - forging a passage where none had ever been. The mountain bled rock and dust, but he did not stop. He would not let sky or fate define his path.

When at last he broke through, daylight spilled into the wound of the stone. A third sky opened before him - one not given, but made.

And thus the prophecy shifted:

He was neither king nor exile.

He was the ocean against the cliff - a will that carves eternity.

The storm had chosen.

The silence had deepened.

The rhythm had flowed.

Now Rakuna carved a world.

# Seventh Ascension - Pusaran Gelap (Whirlpool of the Deep) / Moon of Red Valley

“He sank not to drown, but to rise armed.”

The sea that welcomed him now turned treacherous.

Beyond the mountains of Dua Langit, where salt met blood and foam churned into black, there lay a wound in the world - a whirlpool without end, a spiral of hunger that dragged ships into its throat. Mariners called it Pusaran Gelap, the Dark Maw. To enter it was death. To resist it was folly.

Rakuna dove.

The current seized him instantly, twisting his body like a toy in the grip of giants. Water roared in his ears, louder than any thunder, heavier than any silence. He fought, flailed, thrashed - but the ocean that once embraced him now sought to devour. His chest burned; panic clawed his throat.

And then he saw it.

The bones of titans. A wreck, ancient and cursed, its hull split by storms that lived before memory. Black coral grew through ribs of iron, and barnacles whispered of sailors who had prayed and drowned. The wreck rose like a drowned mountain, its mast piercing upward like the finger of a dead god.

Rakuna latched onto the ruins. His claws scraped wood and steel, his wings battered by currents. The whirlpool dragged, but he climbed - claw over claw, strike over strike. Each movement was rebellion against the abyss, each breath stolen from death's mouth.

The deeper the pull, the higher he climbed. Until at last -

Air.

He burst from the throat of the whirlpool, coughing, wings heavy with water. He clung to wreckage, chest heaving, gaze locked on the heavens.

And the heavens had changed.

Above him, the moons of the Red Valley rose - not one, but three, aligned in an omen long feared. For twelve nights he remained beneath their light. No food passed his beak, no laughter escaped his chest. Hunger stripped him bare, carved his body into bone and shadow.

On the first night, he trembled.

On the fifth, he wept.

On the ninth, he felt nothing.

By the twelfth, he was hollow - a vessel waiting to be filled.

And on the thirteenth night, the moons answered.

Their light pierced him. Crimson arcs etched across his eyes, burning symbols no priest had ever seen. His vision split: one eye saw the world as it was - storm, sea, flesh. The other saw the world as scripture - the language of lightning, the geometry of thunder, the rhythm of winds.

Rakuna had learned not only to endure storms, but to read them.

The whirlpool that sought to devour him had instead armed him. The Red Moons had given him sight not of kings nor beasts, but of eternity itself.

From that night forth, storms were not chaos. They were scripture. And he was their reader.

## **Eighth Ascension - Kolam Pendosa (Pool of Defiant Will) / Feather of Balance**

“He dove where no one invited him - and stayed.”

There were waters no child dared touch. Waters that remembered judgment.

The Kolam Pendosa - Pool of the Condemned. Legends claimed it was where titans bathed after war, rinsing blood and thunder from their bones. Even gods, they said, hesitated before its rim. To plunge unbidden was blasphemy, for the pool did not forgive intruders. It weighed every soul and left only verdict.

Rakuna dove anyway.

The instant he broke its surface, the world shattered.

The waters rose like walls, black and breathing. Out of them came shadows vast as mountains, giants of stormflesh and memory. Their eyes burned not with fire, but with judgment. Voices shook the pool, echoing like drums across eternity:

“Who are you, hatchling, to claim our tide?”

“What right have you to touch our sorrow?”

“Do you think yourself storm?”

The titans pressed upon him, the weight of their gaze alone enough to break spines and unravel will. Rakuna’s wings buckled. His lungs filled with water. Darkness clawed at him - but he did not rise, nor beg release.

He stayed.

One heartbeat. Then another. Then another still.

The longer he endured, the heavier the current pressed, until his bones screamed and his blood burned with salt. Yet he remained, wings spread, claws dug into stone. Not as challenger. Not as pretender. But as one who simply refused to leave.

Silence fell. The giants watched him - not as hatchling, but as equal.

One by one, their forms dissolved into foam and starlight. A few whispered his name. One called him anak diraja, child of kings. Another lowered its crown of stormlight, a gesture unseen for centuries.

When Rakuna finally rose from the depths, the monks of Serambi Angin awaited him.

They were keepers of wind, ascetics whose lives were spent chasing silence within thunder. Their test was not of strength, but of stillness.

A single feather - pale, ordinary, unmarked - was placed in his palm. He was told to stand upon the ledge of the hurricane cliff, where winds tore ships to splinters and stone to sand.

“Seven days,” said the eldest monk. “Do not let the feather fall.”

The storm came. It lashed, screamed, clawed at his body. His claws ached, his eyes bled salt, his wings nearly tore from their sockets. But Rakuna did not clutch the feather in force. He did not cage it. He learned to move with the wind, to let its rage pass through him without breaking him.

On the seventh day, when dawn kissed the feather with gold, it still lay balanced in his palm. Untouched. Unfallen.

The monks bowed. They had never bowed to hatchling nor king. But they bowed to him.

And Rakuna understood:

Balance was not silence of storm. Balance was the storm itself, held in stillness.

From that day forward, the winds did not test him. They recognized him.

# **Ninth Ascension - Gelongsor Jerung (Shark Descent)**

## **/ Bond of Steel**

“If death has teeth... stare back.”

The ninth trial was carved not in skies, nor in flames, but in fear.

The Gelongsor Jerung - Shark Descent - was a cavernous chute shaped like the open maw of a great leviathan. Its walls were slick with black water, its throat lined with jagged stone teeth. To enter was to surrender to the abyss. To emerge was to be reborn - or not at all.

Rakuna stood before the gaping jaws. The villagers whispered prayers, for many who slid within never returned.

The water rushed. The mouth roared. And Rakuna leapt.

He plummeted into the black, his body slammed against stone ridges, his wings slashed by shards like fangs. Every moment was the gnash of death, jaws closing tighter, ready to devour. But Rakuna did not close his eyes. He did not curl in fear.

He stared.

Eyes unblinking, heart roaring louder than the torrent, he stared into the darkness as though daring it to strike harder. And when at last the chute spat him out into the roaring sea, he did not tumble like prey. He burst forth like blade from sheath, water trailing from his wings like a storm of daggers.

He had faced the teeth of death - and stared back.

But the Shark Descent was only the first half of the trial.

Far beyond, in the desert of Gurun Halbaid, a forge burned hotter than suns. It was there Rakuna was given a sword - a flawless weapon of stormsteel, hammered by the desert smiths with chants older than fire.

“This blade is yours,” said the forge-master. “But to ascend, you must break it. For steel is bondage. A king who clings to blade clings to war.”

Rakuna looked upon the sword. Its edge gleamed like frozen lightning. To break it was to betray the very bond it represented. Yet to refuse was to fail the ascension.

He held the blade over the anvil. The storm raged inside him, demanding decision.

Then, slowly, he lowered the steel. He did not shatter it. Instead, he struck a different blow - cleaving the weapon in two, forging not destruction, but division. One half he kept. The other he offered to a brother-in-arms who had stood beside him since the first waters.

The forge roared louder than thunder. The desert winds hushed.

“A king’s sword,” Rakuna declared, “is never his alone. It is every hand that dares to raise it beside him.”

The forge-master bowed his head. The desert flames flickered in assent.

From that day, two blades sang where once there was one. Not master and servant, but equal bonds, equal wills. Rakuna had learned that steel was not power - steel was trust.

And trust was sharper than any sword.

# Tenth Ascension - Ombak Agung (Embrace of Calamity) / Sorrow's Embrace

“Fall not to avoid impact... but to become it.”

The Tenth Ascension began not in silence, but in the roar of a living ocean.

The sky darkened. The horizon lifted, rising higher and higher until it blotted out the heavens. A wall of water, a tsunami crowned in black lightning, rushed toward the shore like the hand of an angry god. Villagers screamed. Mothers clutched their children. Warriors fled though their hearts burned with shame.

But Rakuna did not move.

He looked upon the calamity, its voice a thunder greater than storms, and he leapt forward into the maw of the wave.

The sea swallowed him whole. Its weight crushed bone, its chaos ripped air from his lungs. Yet in that suffocating dark, Rakuna did not thrash in panic - he danced.

He flipped through torrents, curved his body with the surge, surrendered not to fear but to rhythm. He became the current's partner, bending chaos into motion, storm into song.

When at last the wave broke upon the cliffs, the ocean did not shatter him. Instead, it bowed. The waters spilled outward like courtiers kneeling, and Rakuna stood drenched but unbroken, crowned not by lightning, but by the submission of the sea.

The people gasped. The elders whispered: “He did not survive the wave. He became the wave.”

Yet the sea was not the only trial of the Tenth Ascension.

From the ocean's fury, Rakuna journeyed inland, to the valley of Kelir Mawar - the Tomb of Roses, where the dead of countless wars were laid. There, the priests gave him a task no storm could prepare him for.

A child lay before him. Not his kin, not his blood. A life lost to conflict, nameless but not forgotten. Rakuna was commanded to dig the grave with his own hands, to bear the weight of the small body, and to lower it into the earth.

At first his arms trembled from exhaustion, but soon it was not his arms that shook - it was his soul. Each handful of soil fell heavier than the ocean he had conquered. Each breath tore through him like lightning in his chest.

When the grave was sealed, Rakuna knelt. His tears fell, hot and unashamed, watering the earth above the child.

The priests spoke: “A king who cannot grieve for those not his own is no king. To carry a crown is to carry sorrow, heavier than mountains.”

Rakuna did not hide his grief. He embraced it. He let it burn, hollowing him until the storm within was not only thunder, but mourning.

His tears did not shame him. They made him king.

For the Tenth Ascension was this:

To ride the wave of calamity not as conqueror, but as calamity itself.

To bury the nameless and weep as though they were his own.

And thus the world learned - Rakuna's strength was not that he never fell, but that when he did, he fell as storm and rose as sorrow.

# Eleventh Ascension - Terowong Merah (Flaming Tunnel) / Dawn Without Thunder

“The hottest paths forge the coldest minds.”

The Eleventh Ascension was not fought in water, nor in wind, but in fire.

At the entrance of the Terowong Merah, the Crimson Tunnel, flames coiled like serpents of molten breath. The spiral cavern glowed as if the earth itself had been hollowed and set ablaze. Those who entered did not return; their screams were said to echo in the stone forever.

Rakuna stepped inside.

The heat slammed into him like a beast’s roar. His feathers singed, his lungs scorched with every breath. The tunnel twisted endlessly, its walls pulsing with living fire. But he did not cry out. He did not flee.

Each step was silent, measured, deliberate.

The flames lashed at him, but he did not resist them. He let them carve. He let the heat sear his marrow, not as torment, but as sculptor. Where fire sought to consume him, it instead revealed him. Where it burned away weakness, it left behind clarity.

By the time Rakuna emerged, the fire had not destroyed him - it had crowned him. The blaze left no scars upon his body, only the unseen etching of sovereignty, a calmness deeper than flame.

The priests declared: “He has walked through the hottest path, and in silence, fire became his crown.”

Yet the trial did not end in flame.

From the inferno of the tunnel, Rakuna climbed to Bukit Nur’Langit - Hill of Heaven’s Light. There, he was told to wait.

The sky above stretched wide and empty. He prayed for thunder. He demanded lightning. He roared for the storm to come down and answer him.

But the sky gave him nothing.

No cloud. No wind. No rain.

Only silence.

For days he knelt beneath that barren expanse, scorched by sun, pierced by stars, hollowed by absence. He began to doubt. Had the storm abandoned him? Had his path been nothing but a cruel jest of the heavens?

But then, as dawn spilled over the horizon, Rakuna understood.

The storm does not always roar.

It does not always flash.

It does not always break the sky.

Sometimes, the truest storm is peace - the calm that follows, the silence that endures.

When Rakuna descended from the hill, he no longer sought thunder to prove his crown. His eyes were quiet. His voice was steady. And in that stillness, the people trembled, for they saw a king whose presence carried the weight of storm even without its sound.

The Eleventh Ascension taught him this:

That fire does not burn the worthy.

That silence can carry thunder greater than any roar.

# Twelfth Ascension - Lompatan Raja (Leap of the King) / Crest of Becoming

“Do not fall. Command the fall.”

The final trial came not in secret, but in spectacle.

The kingdom gathered. The mountains held their breath. Even the skies leaned low, as if the gods themselves had come to witness.

At the summit of Gunung Diraja, the Peak of Kings, a single platform of stone jutted into the void. Below it stretched the endless drop - a gorge carved by storms older than memory, a fall that had devoured every pretender who dared it. Above it churned the heavens, alive with lightning, waiting to mark its heir.

Rakuna stood upon the edge.

The people below held silence, no voice daring to break the air. The priests whispered in their throats, the Pendekar lowered their blades. Even the children, who knew not fear, pressed their foreheads into their mothers' hands.

Rakuna did not look down. He looked up.

“Do not fall,” the prophecy had spoken.

“Command the fall.”

And so, with no cry, with no fanfare, he leapt.

The wind tore at him instantly, screaming past like claws. His golden feathers flared, the storm seeking to claim him as another corpse. The world rushed, the abyss yawned, and for a heartbeat, he plummeted like any mortal bird, like any broken heir.

But Rakuna did not scream.

He folded his wings.

The void accepted him. The storm readied its hunger. And then, at the edge of ruin, he unfurled - golden wings snapping open with thunder's crack, carving the fall into flight.

For one suspended breath, he did not fall.

He flew.

The kingdom roared. The skies answered. The gorge itself trembled with the echo of his defiance. In that moment, no one saw a quail, no one saw a king - they saw the storm itself, wearing feathers, claiming the heavens.

But the flight was not the end.

At the summit, lightning tore the clouds open. The Storm Mark descended - first as a single golden feather, then twisting into a vortex, a spiral of burning light that split sky from stone. Its voice was silence, its presence unbearable.

Rakuna reached.

The feather burned into his palm.

It did not bless him.

It branded him.

Flame without burning.

Storm without drowning.

Ruler without vanity.

This was the weight of the crown: not power, but burden. Not dominion, but service.

Rakuna knelt, scarred and aflame, the vortex circling him until it sank into his marrow. When he rose, he was no longer hatchling, no longer heir, no longer quail of prophecy.

He was Rakuna Diraja.

Servant of the storm.

The Crownfire King.

And from that day forth, the skies themselves carried his name.

# THE GREAT CALAMITY

The storm was not silence.

It was fracture.

The skies split as if torn by unseen talons.

Black feathers rained, not soft but heavy - each one a curse, each one a dirge. Where they touched earth, crops withered. Rivers turned bitter.

Children were born without voices.

The laughter of villages went hollow.

And in the halls of the Storm Mark, the crest itself flickered like a dying star.

The Stormseers wept.

For prophecy whispered: "The Featherless One stirs."

## Valley of Heaven's Fall

Beneath three eclipsed moons - blood, ash, and shadow - Rakuna stood where heavens themselves once touched earth. The valley was silent, yet trembling with unseen breath.

There, Ka'Syara descended.

Not as beast.

Not as demon.

But as mirror.

His eyes, Rakuna's eyes.

His wings, Rakuna's wings.

But hollow, stripped of creed, stripped of mercy.

Ka'Syara was storm without soul. Heir without burden. Crown without compassion.

The twisted reflection of everything Rakuna could have become - and still might.

## **The Shattered Duel**

Their clash was not of swords, but of skies.

Winds folded in upon themselves. Lightnings did not strike - they screamed. The valley's cliffs shattered into dust. Oceans miles away rose in revolt.

Every strike Ka'Syara cast was not against Rakuna's body, but against his certainty.

Every counter Rakuna gave was not against Ka'Syara's storm, but against his own shadow.

This was not two kings fighting.

It was one soul divided.

## **The First Storm Word**

When the heavens themselves began to unweave, Rakuna remembered the forbidden teaching of Serambi Angin:

“Before thunder, there was only One Word. The Word that cracked silence into storm. To speak it is to return all storms to ash.”

The First Storm Word - older than language, older than gods, buried in silence itself.

A word no heir had ever dared to utter.

For to speak it meant ending the Line forever.

To erase not only Ka'Syara, but himself.

To silence every heir of storm until the end of days.

Or worse - to unleash rebellion eternal, a storm that no crown, no creed, no god could ever command again.

## **The Choice**

Rakuna stood between silence and rebellion. Between ending his line or letting storms forever roam wild.

Ka'Syara's voice mocked him:

"You are not king. You are chain. Break - or be broken."

The winds howled, waiting.

The moons bled, watching.

The Storm Mark burned upon his chest, flickering like a dying sun.

Rakuna opened his mouth.

And the valley held its breath.

# THE VEIL OF ASHEN WIND

Storms end not in silence, but in rumor.

And so it was with Rakuna Diraja.

The Valley of Heaven's Fall still bore the scars - cliffs split, rivers turned black, trees frozen mid-scream - yet no body was found. No feather of goldfire remained. No crown, no heir. Only the hush of a world that had seen its king wrestle shadow, then vanish like smoke.

The elders called it not defeat. Not death. But departure.

## Realm Outside Fate

Some say that at the brink of utterance - when the First Storm Word trembled on his tongue - Rakuna did not choose throne nor silence, destruction nor rebellion. Instead, he stepped sideways, into what the Stormseers named the Veil of Ashen Wind.

A realm where undone futures drift like torn banners.

Where storms that never were coil and fade into nothingness.

Where rivers run backward, carrying the regrets of kings.

There, it is said, Rakuna walks still - not as bird, nor crown, but as whisper. Guarding not what was, but what might have been.

## The Silent Sky

Others claim he never left at all. That he ascended into the storm itself, becoming the Silent Sky - the unseen watcher. They say every lightning that flashes without thunder is his gaze, every sudden calm before rain his breath.

He no longer rules, they whisper.

He guards.

Not with throne, not with decree, but with waiting.

Eyes unseen. Wings untouchable. A crown scattered across the very winds.

## **The Testament**

In the Skyvault Temple, high above Emas Nadija where pilgrims climb until lungs bleed and prayers crack, one inscription remains, carved into storm-veined marble:

“Power is not the legacy. The choice is.”

No priest claims to have written it.

No scribe confesses the hand.

Yet it endures - untouched by erosion, unmarred by time.

And when thunder gathers, pilgrims swear the letters glow, as if written by lightning itself.

## **Echo of Prophecy**

Thus the world remembers Rakuna not by crown, nor by victory, but by ambiguity.

A king who became storm.

A heir who chose neither path.

A quail whose legend does not end, but waits - veiled in ash, perched between silence and return.

And so every generation asks:

Did Rakuna leave us? Or does he watch still?

Did he save us? Or merely delay the storm?

No seer answers.

No god replies.

Only the wind.

And the wind says nothing.

# EPILOGUE: THE SILENT PROPHECY

It is said that when Rakuna vanished into ash and silence, the world did not end - it merely paused, like a breath withheld by the heavens.

The rivers still ran. The mountains still stood. Yet the rhythm of thunder faltered, as though the sky itself waited for a word never spoken.

And in that pause, the prophecy was carved - not by priest, nor Pendekar, nor king, but by the storm itself:

The Silent Prophecy

“When thunder forgets its rhythm,

And sky no longer speaks for land...

The one who dares to silence the storm

Shall become the storm itself.”

## The Eternal Choice

The Silent Prophecy is no riddle of crowns or thrones.

It is not a call to kingship, nor a promise of power.

It is a reminder - that Rakuna's legacy is not in the feathers of goldfire, nor in the Storm Mark, nor even in the Twelve Ascensions.

It is in the choice.

The choice to bear the storm and not be broken.

The choice to yield when fury would consume.

The choice to rise not as ruler, but as servant of balance.

For storms come and go.

Empires rise and fall.

But choice endures.

## **A Legend Without End**

And so the legend of Rakuna lives - not as bird nor king, not as warrior nor crown, but as choice eternal.

Children whisper his name when lightning cracks the sky.

Pendekar trace his sigil before stepping into battle.

Mothers hush their young with tales of the quail who dared the heavens and returned as silence.

Yet no one knows if Rakuna waits beyond the Veil of Ashen Wind,

Or if he has become the Silent Sky itself.

Perhaps he will return when Ka'Syara stirs once more.

Perhaps he never left.

But the prophecy does not promise his return.

It promises only this:

That when the storm forgets its rhythm,

someone - anyone - must dare to silence it.

And in that daring, become the storm itself.