

The Djinn

The Djinn plays a significant role in the unfolding chapter, where the protagonist, having crossed over the rocks, meets Sol, who is struggling to recover from a cold swim in the sea. She is hypothermic and physically weakened by the ordeal, needing urgent care and warmth. The protagonist, unsure of how to handle the situation, wraps Sol in a dry blanket and gives her coffee, his mind overwhelmed by a surge of conflicting emotions. While his protective instincts take over, a deep sense of anxiety about her fragile state fills him, as he tries to keep her alert and engaged while they drift on their boat, *Flower*. His unease grows as he contemplates the new vulnerability that has been introduced into his life, realizing just how much he desires to help Sol but also how little he truly knows about what she needs.

As Sol's fever breaks, a flood of memories from an earlier encounter with Alistair takes over her weakened mind. In a vivid, disjointed recollection, Sol recounts a moment when she helped Alistair, a figure caught off guard by flames, by retrieving his glasses amidst the chaos. She describes herself as acting with the swiftness and confidence of a djinn from *Arabian Nights*, displaying an almost magical ability to navigate through the perilous situation. In her weakened state, Sol hands the protagonist two items: a waterproof match and Alistair's heavy spectacles, which symbolize her triumph over adversity and her hidden resilience. These tokens become physical reminders of her strength and survival instinct, offering a rare glimpse into her inner courage and determination. The protagonist listens in awe, fascinated by Sol's bravery, despite her fragile condition.

As Sol's fever continues to subside, the two work together on restoring the boat, preparing to set out on the next leg of their journey. Yet, the journey is shadowed by Sol's lingering health issues, as she still struggles with bouts of weakness and lack of appetite. Upon arriving at a seawall, a seemingly peaceful and serene place, the protagonist can feel the weight of concern for Sol's health pressing down on him. Though there is hope for the journey ahead, the realization that Sol's condition could worsen at any time hangs heavily in the air. Sol continues to demand stories from the protagonist, seeking comfort and distraction from her illness, a request that the protagonist gladly fulfills. These stories become a lifeline for both of them, offering moments of peace and a sense of normalcy in the midst of their uncertain lives.

One of the stories that resonates most with Sol is the tale of Molly Thorn, a young girl captivated by a mysterious packet of seeds. This story sparks something within Sol, igniting her imagination and providing a welcome respite from her physical discomfort. Inspired by Sol's newfound interest in storytelling, the protagonist introduces her to letters and the power of writing, hoping to foster her creativity and give her a sense of purpose beyond her current struggles. Sol, initially hesitant to engage with the pencil and paper, watches the protagonist closely, soaking in the lessons he shares about the importance of words and how they can shape the world. As Sol's understanding of storytelling grows, the bond between them deepens, with the protagonist realizing that this simple act of sharing stories could be the key to giving her the strength she needs to navigate their uncertain future. Even though Sol remains fragile, the light in her eyes begins to shine a little brighter as she begins to grasp the power of language and stories, setting the stage for the rest of their journey.