

# Interlaced Memories

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*To escape the visions that plague them Rasp and Arac agree to share what they know to piece together their lost past, discovering they share more in common than they thought.*

*Zinc, Kuro, Jex, Dez, Elet, and Raz=Skof's*

*Irken Race (c) Jhonen Vasquez*

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# 1 - The First Haunting

Our story starts during late January,

The snow was falling in the mid afternoon on a cold day. Everyone was overjoyed by the presence of the snow, as it never normally got to thick. A group of friends decided to celebrate by going out to play before it passed.

The entire meadow was filled with the sounds of laughing, playing, and occasional a shocked yelp of someone getting snow forced down their shirt. Zinc was the center of the fun, calling a snowball fight to be held soon, giving people only enough time to stock up.

The teams divided up into two groups.

"I don't really get the point of this game!" Jex said as he jumped to avoid collision with an icy packed snowball.

"There is no point to it! This is just of fun!" Rasp yelled out pelting Kuro with one of the snowballs.

"Hey! Stop targeting me!" Kuro said as the snowball hit him on the back of the head, sliding down his shirt. "AH! AAAAH!!!! THAT'S COOOOOLD!!!!"

Rasp could only laugh as Kuro danced about trying to get the snow out of his jacket.

Even Zech was in on the fun.

Everywhere there was joyous playful noise, except in Arac's head. He was laying down far to the side hiding in a slight dip in the meadow behind a small snow fort he constructed out of the meager amount of snow that was there. He was lost in his own world, completely forgetting all the activity around him. He was in his normal attire, a simple t-shirt and loose slacks with a light jacket draped over his shoulders. The temperature never bothered him before, why should it? He was too far off in his thoughts to notice the cold anyways.

Elet noticed Arac alone and began to sneak up on him. Being on rival teams he had a snowball ready, but he didn't intend to use it on Arac unless in defense, he didn't even expect to sneak up on him. He got closer, and Arac stayed still as a statue, laying face up with his head turned away from Elet. Elet crept closer still, and Arac maintained his motionless state.

Elet was finally in range and bolted towards him for a glomp shouting "GOTCHA!" but he stopped short.

"Arac?" Elet said curiously, kneeling down next to him. He remained unresponsive.

"Arac?" Elet said with more worry than curiosity in his voice. His worries only deepened as he failed to respond again.

Arac's golden eyes were open, glittering in the setting sun, and yet his expression was blank, distant, and unreadable. Elet knew he was thinking, but of what he could only wonder.

Arac closed his eyes, the first motion he had made in a while. Images danced against the darkness of his own eyelids while an eerie music played through his head. He could feel it, like a haunting. It was one of those memories that one would do best to leave behind.

Elet stared intensely as the figure before him began to shift and as if awaking from a bad dream he suddenly sprung up. He was panting, his golden eyes wide and worry-filled.

"Arac?" a soft voice said, "are, are you ok?" Elet placed a hand on the shoulder as Arac erratic breathing began to calm.

"I'm fine," he responded. He shifted and pulled Elet into a firm hug. "I'm sorry if I scared you there."

A slight smirk crossed Arac's face and he shivered. He looked up, there, about ten yards away, Rasp stood with the perfect opportunity to get Arac with his own snowball but merely looked away. He knew

the story, if only pieces here and there, but even he has more respect than to taunt Arac with what he's going through. He remembers faintly what happened, and he knows those memories come back to haunt him each year, once the snow starts falling. Rasp turned and walked off, glancing at Arac and Elet one last time over his shoulder. Arac gave him a thankful look.

Zech viewed this all from the safety of a tall pine tree. She sat about ten feet above the ground and spoke softly to herself.

"Even with how much those two fight and argue, they owe each other so much..." Zech let out a sigh.

"With how entwined their past is, I suppose they've become brother's to each other."

She chuckled silently then allowed her expression to fall to its normal deep-in-thought state. "They can't hold it much longer," she looked at Arac, "and something tells me he'll be the first to jump."

Arac nuzzles to Elet then looked up as a voice called out to them from the porch of the house. It was Dez, calling everyone out of the cold for hot chocolate. Arac took Elet by the hand as they both darted back to the house.

"And yet, perhaps things will hold together," Zech said from her perch in the tree, "I suppose I'll just have to wait and see,"

## 2 - We Need to Talk

Everyone was excited about the hot chocolate Dez had made, and ran in once they heard the call for it. Kuro had been standing right next to the door after getting tired of Rasp continuously dumping snow down his shirt or pelting him with snowballs. Dez started to pass out the hot chocolate as people began walking through the door. Everyone who received the hot chocolate decided to stay inside, except for Dez. He stood on the porch, watching as the snow came down as a light powder and rested on the heavily trampled layer of snow. A slight worried expression crossed his face, there were two more cups of hot chocolate that had yet to be handed out. Two people hadn't come in yet, and they were nowhere in sight, and meanwhile, on the far side of the meadow where the open field breaks into a vast forest of snow heavy trees, a game still continues.

Rasp fled behind one of the trees as a snowball just barely missed him. Jex was finally getting a hang of the game and started to loosen up a little after Rasp had chased him out of sight of the others. The two of them had been firing back and forth for a while completely oblivious to the missing sounds of their friends laughter. They finally took note of this when they stopped to catch their breath. Rasp began clinching at his chest, as did Jex. The cold air felt rough on their lungs after their game.

Rasp smiled at Jex, "Good game-" he broke and panted- "I didn't expect you to have such good aim." Jex returned with a nod and a ragged 'thank you.'

"I guess we better head in before our friends start worrying about us," Jex said after getting his breath back.

"Sounds like a good idea to me," Rasp said back, "we better hurry though, I wouldn't want to be out here once dark sets over."

"Hm? Afraid of the dark?" Jex asked.

"Far from it, but do you know how far we've wandered, strange things happen here under the shroud of darkness."

Jex could only give a quizzing look. The sun was making it's last glimmers in the night sky, turning the snow white clouds in the sky a marvelous menagerie of colors. Different shades and hues of red, pink, purple, orange, and even a bit of gold outlined every cloud near the sunset.

Rasp soon found himself lost in his thoughts, and old memories playing back to him like a broken record as he stared down the sunset. Images began dancing in his mind. He felt a strong tug at his heart. All the colors began to melt away into black and white in his head in a dizzying array that caused him to fall to his knees.

Jex looked at him with shock. "Rasp? Hey! What are you doing?"

Jex waved a hand in front of Rasp's face. It was the same unresponsive expression the Arac had. An old memory was back to haunt Rasp as well.

Jex was very uncertain about what had just happened. He hadn't known Rasp well, or long but he could tell something was definitely wrong.

Rasp said nothing, but just continued to stare at the colors painted on the clouds by the sunset. In his own mind a slideshow of odd memories, like pictures, flipped through his head as a melodious tune whistled out on a soft wooden flute.

Jex, thinking quickly, found a way to awaken him from the trance.

Rasp was suddenly brought out of his slideshow of old memories as he felt an icy glob of slush hit the top of his head. Shocked by the sudden contact he fell face first into the snow.

"HEY!" He said turning to Jex who had a hold on a tree branch covered with snow that he had shaken

to wake up Rasp, “what was that for?”

Jex couldn't quite explain what happened, so instead he just pointed out how the last sliver of sun had just disappeared over the horizon leaving their path under a shroud of darkness. Rasp stood up, shocked.

“oh... crap...” were the only audibly words Rasp mumbled.

Jex looked in the general direction of the house, “we need to hurry back, they're all probably very worried...”

Rasp only nodded as they made their way back to the house. The moon was covered by the clouds that had given them the snow, leaving them in complete darkness as they wandered across the meadow, sticking close together so that they wouldn't get even more lost than they already were. Finally they spotted something. A light flickered in the distance through the curtained windows of a house with figures inside shuffling about.

“It's the house!” Rasp shouted, too excited to contain himself. He darted towards the house dragging Jex by his wrist across the snowy field and finally stopping on the porch where a very worried Dez was happy to see them.

“I was so worried about you two! What happened? Where did you go? I called everybody in for hot chocolate but you two were nowhere to be seen!” Dez said as they stepped onto the porch. “I'm so glad to see you're ok.”

He gave Jex a light hug and then took them both inside. Rasp wandered around the house for a bit while Dez tried to get the story out of Jex who didn't seem to feel like talking. He finally found what he was looking for. Elet, Skof, Kuro, Wayra, and Arac all sat around a circular table playing some sort of card game. As Elet dealt the next hand Rasp walked up behind Arac and firmly put his hands down on each of his shoulders. He lifted Arac out of his seat and forced him to come with him.

“Wah!!! Hey!!!” the exasperated Arac complained as Rasp drug him away.

He walked into a spare room and closed the door once Arac entered. Arac finally caught onto what happened, Rasp was starting to have his visions as well. He looked at the short figure standing before him with a serious face.

It was one of the few things in common that they had. They don't seem to remember the first half of their lives, as if they just materialized out of thin air. They don't remember their family or their lives before, they can't even remember their own age or birthday, all of those memories were lost. Every winter though, once the snow starts falling they see pictures in their heads. Never enough to tell a story, but just enough to get you interested. They play through their head in a slideshow of black and white to the odd music of an old wooden flute.

“We need to talk...” Rasp said.

### 3 - Old Enemies

They both dropped their human disguises showing their natural Irken skin.

Rasp had a serious look in his dark red eyes, which Arac returned through his own glittering golden eyes. They scowled at each other for a few deathly silent moments, like a staring contest, neither of them seemed to blink, still as statues.

They had hated each other as long as anyone could remember. They were such complete opposites. Arac always seemed calm and collected, yet subtly mischievous. His glittering golden eyes held a helpful power, he could listen into peoples thoughts. He was strongly built with fairly dark skin, always enjoying the company of others, and had a charming yet dangerous grin, and stood around seven inches over the head of Rasp.

Rasp, on the other hand, was a bundle of loose energy, rarely contained, he often speaks his mind or acts without thinking. His dark red eyes had more of a polished shine, than a glitter, and were often unreadable. He was thinly built, even girlishly built, but very lean, and stronger than Arac, although Arac could easily outrun him. He had never enjoyed company very much, he'd much rather be alone, preferably in the woods seeking out quiet spots to think, or watching wolves if ever he spots one.

Arac said nothing, but turned for the door. Rasp was there in a split second, trying to use his rather small framed body to block the much larger door.

Arac sighed, "What do you want to know?"

Arac would never admit it but he somewhat feared the little guy, for the obvious reason of strength but also for an unconscious reason he couldn't explain.

Rasp crossed his arms across his chest and glared at him sternly.

"What I *want* to know is everything," Rasp said, being nit-picky with Arac's speech, "but what I *need* to know is what's going on."

Arac gave a sigh and rolled his eyes prominently, Rasp could be so infuriating.

"What do you mean 'what's going on'? I can't help if you aren't specific," Arac said taking a seat in an old desk chair.

"You know very well what I mean!" Rasp was getting aggravated now, and it showed as the sharp edge shot into his voice.

Rasp waited a moment and calmed down. His eyes shifted to the floor, "I want to know...what do you see? What to you see in the snow? Those old memories are bugging you, what are they about? Who do you see in them? Why does it scare you? I want to know..."

Arac sat in shock, his legs partially crossed comfortably in the chair, and his glittering eyes wide. It had almost sounded as if Rasp was worried about him. He studied Rasp's expression for a moment, to see if this was some sort of joke, but as always, he got nothing from Rasp. Arac often wondered if the boy thought at all. If he did, the thoughts always escaped Arac. Normally every person has some amount of thought he can hear, from the simplest, to the most complicated, but Rasp never had any thoughts Arac could hear. Sometimes he wondered if Rasp wasn't Irken but some sort of thick headed Irken look alike, that was either incredibly intelligent, or incredibly dull. Maybe he was an Irken experiment like Zech and her "siblings", he had never seemed to get many readable thoughts off of them. Or maybe he was some sort of earthen animal in disguise as an Irken, he couldn't read the thoughts of dogs or cats- not that he had particularly wanted to. He entertained the thought of Rasp being some simple minded earth being for a while until abruptly being brought back from his thoughts by a rough clawed hand being

brought harshly across his face.

“Are you even listening to me?” Rasp said, with a sharp edge in each word. His dark red eyes seemed to set ablaze when he was angry, presenting a rather threatening glare.

Arac shook the sting of the open handed slap off and rubbed his cheek. There were slight traces of red on his hand where Rasp’s sharp nails had scraped a thin layer of skin off, making him bleed slightly. Arac tsk’d at him, “Now Rasp, we shouldn’t be doing that. We wouldn’t want blood shed here, after all, we’re just guests at this house.”

Rasp’s blood began to boil.

“Now Arac, do you really think annoying him further will help at all?” a soft feminine voice came from the shadows.

Both of their hearts leapt with a sudden fright at the new voice in the room. They looked over next to the window, where the light of the moon illuminated the blinds in the dimly lit room. The blinds opened with a quick swish, revealing Zech leaning against the wall coolly. The moonlight filled up the room with a calming blue light. Arac and Rasp heaved a sigh of relief.

“Don’t startle us like that!” Rasp said.

“Feh, startled? I was fine, but the look on your face was priceless,” Arac teased.

Rasp growled low in his throat at his comment.

Zech shifted and moved closer, she was taller than both of them with one natural red eye, and one eye that was partially purple and partially blue.

“Settle down you two,” she said coming to a halt next to Arac, who was still seated in the office chair.

Arac let out a slight chuckle, “So you were listening in on all of that?”

Zech chuckled back, “Listening in? No, I had just come by to drop something off...” she walked over to Rasp and placed a small brown case in his hand, “I believe this is yours.”

Rasp clutched the small familiar brown case, and in his mind, he could tell, Zech knew something she wasn’t showing.

She smiled and walked out of the room, completely nonchalant but pausing before she closed the door-

“Oh, and also, next time you two decide to have one of your little ‘chats’, I suggest you find a place a little more sound proof than a spare bedroom.”

With the she walked out, not closing the door behind her, revealing a pale Irken girl standing in the doorway. It was Wayra, and she didn’t look in to good a mood.

“Oops...” was the only thing Rasp said.

Wayra wasn’t the type to get easily aggravated, but when she does, it shows. Her dark green eyes were framed into a disapproving scowl, the way an owner would look down on a disobedient dog. She let out an exasperated sigh.

“Home. Both of you. Now.” She made it short and simple as the two of them slinked out the door and into the main room.

Rasp walked towards the door to the outside where the Voot cruiser was waiting, under about five inches of snow. Before Arac made it to the door Elet had him in a clinging hug asking Wayra if he could please stay.

Rasp felt his blood run cold... no one was going to ask if he could stay...

He walk out the door without another word stopping at the Voot. Instead of climbing in like he should have he walked by it and treaded across the small sheet of fresh snow back out to the meadow, and finally to the forest.

Jealousy was the dominant emotion in his mind. He was jealous of Arac, he had lots of friends, even after what he had done, he can still make friends. He came to rest next to a stump as the wind began to blow. He moved to the side facing away from the wind nesting away from the cold. He pulled his CD player out of his pocket and shuffled through the few CDs he had actually brought with him, put one in

and curled up against the side of the giant stump, letting the lyrics flow through his head lulling him into a trance like phase where all he did was think, completely contradictory to Arac's theories. He sang along softly, the words to the first song that played...

*Where did I go wrong, I lost a friend  
Somewhere along in the bitterness  
And I would have stayed up with you all night  
Had I known how to save a life*



## 4 - Puzzle Peices

Rasp shivered, now he wished he'd brought a jacket with him. He switched back to his human disguise again, at least his antenna wouldn't freeze that way...

He continued humming along to the music, completely lost in thought, closing his eyes in concentration. He looked asleep, laying motionless in the snow and allowed the images to play through his head again.

*He stood before the almighty Tallest, not the present day Tallest but the tallest from a long time ago...*

*"Rasp! I trust all is running well here?" the Tallest said.*

*"Yes Sir!" Rasp said snapping to attention at the mention of his name. He stood, well uniformed, with a strict, military look on his face; nothing like the Rasp who lay there curled in the snow. His uniform was high a high collared jacket with long sleeves and multiple pouches, which were stuffed with random notes and gismos. A small badge was pinned tightly to his chest pocket, written in an Irken hand writing so small one would need too strain their eyes to decipher it. In his left hand he held a small device that looked somewhat like a dental pick, and in the other hand he held a small chip with a trail of assorted wires coming off it.*

*"Have you made any advancements in your Scientific Studies?" the Tallest quizzed.*

The memory faded off from there...

"Scientific Studies... was that really me before the...?" Rasp shifted in thought knocking the small layer of snow that had began to gather on him off.

He relaxed, searching for the memories again. Unlike Arac, he wanted to know what happened, he wanted to know the story- not forget it, to try and recover the memory of the first half of his life. His mind rolled another vision as he settled back against the large stump.

*There was an explosion on an Irken science base on the moon of a planet Irk had conquered. Rasp bolted down the hallway, his uniform tattered and covered in some unidentifiable black liquid, he made jagged turns as if he was trying to catch a mouse, zigzagging all over the hallway.*

*"Trator!" he shouted at nothing. He swiped at the air in front of him, still in a mad dash to no where.*

*"Sorry boy," a voice from nowhere said, "Tallest's orders, your experimentations have become to dangerous, you've become a threat to the empire."*

*It echoed hauntingly down the hall.*

*"You lie!" he said, sounding much more like the Rasp of today every second.*

*Something exploded over Rasp's head blowing a hole through the ceiling of the base to the outside. The sound of heavy footsteps tromped across the roof, someone was escaping. Rasp jumped through the hole in the roof and chased after the sound of the footsteps.*

*"You think I'm lying, do you?" the voice was smooth and taunting, and the footsteps stopped. "Fine then, here's a message, in his hand writing no less-" a paper seemed to appear out of the air right in front of Rasp's eyes "-that shall illustrate what I've been trying to say."*

*Rasp caught the paper, and read it with a shocked expression.*

*A laugh came from the same direction the paper did, when it suddenly occurred to Rasp- a cloaking device! With no need for flashy moves, he stuck his hand in his pocket and felt around until he felt the knob of a small device he had put together in his spare time. The device pulsed with an electric wave, causing to confuse the signal of the cloaking device. There was a small orange spark, then a small flash,*

*and an Irken figure appeared before him.*

*“Eric...” Rasp said, unmoved by the familiar face.*

*The Irken’s golden eyes glittered brilliantly.*

*“I hope you enjoy the rest of your life in Exile Rasp,” he turned away from the enraged Rasp as his pack sprouted to robotic wings, “and for the last time... my names Arac. Goodbye br-”*

A warm hand gently touched Rasps cold skin bringing him back from his dreaming and leaving a vast cliffhanger in his thought. His eyes shot open, and he shivered violently.

“Nnnnn...” he moaned and sat up, brushing of the small layer of snow that had gathered on him.

“Kitten? What are you doing out here in the cold?”

It was Raz. After Rasp had stormed off in jealousy of Arac, Raz had followed him out into the snow. He held a flashlight in one hand and a spare jacket in the other.

“Um... here...” he said softly, offering Rasp the spare jacket.

Rasp happily slipped it on, and it was still warm. He smiled at Raz, and looped one of his arms around his neck in a sort of half hug.

“So, how’d you find me out here Kitten?” Rasp was, of course, referring to Raz, as he rarely called people by their actual names.

Raz avoided eye contact shyly.

“Heh, never mind,” Rasp said, with a half laugh in his throat.

Raz looked back up at Rasp momentarily then looked back down, when a small brown case caught his eye. Rasp caught Raz’s eye wandering to the case.

“Want to know what’s in it?” Rasp said, seeming to read Raz’s mind.

Raz looked up again, “If... if you don’t mind...”

Rasp smiled, “You like music Kitten?”

Raz nodded slightly.

Rasp’s expression softened, “Heh...” He opened the case and pulled out a small wooden flute. “Then I think you’ll like this...”

He placed his mouth softly on the delicate old instrument, and began to play a soft lifting tune, his fingers moving stiffly from the cold. Raz relaxed and listened to the music, when Rasp suddenly stopped. Raz looked up at him wondering why he had stopped, and Rasp grasped his stomach which made an uneasy gurgle.

“Oops, heh, sorry about that, in all the excitement it seems I forgot to eat,” even with this odd news Rasp was smiling, he even laughed a little, and for the first time in a long time, he was genuinely happy. After a slight pause Rasp finally said in a low whisper, “... and Kitten... thanks for coming out here for me...”