

“HEY, Yuna,” said Tidus. “If your mom was Al Bhed –”
He knew, without asking, that Yuna’s mother was long gone. She hadn’t said so in as many words, but the way she spoke about her parents made it clear enough.

“If she was Al Bhed,” he went on, “does that mean you *speak* Al Bhed?”

She gave him a look – one of those looks of hers that he found so arresting. He had already become quite convinced that no girls in Zanarkand would have been able to look at a guy in that way.

“You don’t just learn languages by being related to people,” said Lulu, before Yuna was able to answer.

“I know that!” said Tidus. “I’m not *that* dumb, Lulu – I know you think I am, but ... I thought Yuna’s mom might’ve spoken Al Bhed to her when she was a kid, that’s all.”

Yuna shook her head. “I only know a few words. Actually, it was more because of my father. He was very interested in Al Bhed culture.”

“Oh really?” Tidus asked. “He was a High Summoner though, right? Doesn’t that mean he had something to do with Yevon?”

“Yes,” she said, “but he loved all the peoples of Spira, and the Al Bhed most of all. The priests sent him to them hoping he would just preach the ways of Yevon, but after a few weeks, he became fascinated by how they lived. That’s what he always used to tell me.”

“That must have been dangerous,” Lulu pointed out.

“Yes,” said Yuna. “But my father told me that we must always follow our hearts.”

She gave Tidus another look; he felt his cheeks warming.

Lulu seemed slightly irritated. “It’s all well and good if you’re High Summoner,” she said. “The rest of us just have to follow the teachings. If you’d been going around in Bevelle as a child speaking Al Bhed, it would have been very risky. And the same goes for Besaid.”

“But in Bevelle, everyone knew who I was anyway,” said Yuna, with a shrug. “Anyway, my mother didn’t want me speaking it. Every time my father tried to teach me a word, she used to scold him.”

“That was very sensible of her,” said Lulu. “It’s not proper to speak badly. It’s just like Besaid: only uncultured young men insist on using the local dialect.”

“Local dialect?” said Tidus curiously.

She frowned. “You know: all the *blitzers* talk like this, *ya*. Fortunately, the ladies of Besaid are a little more refined. I’m just glad Yuna never tried speaking with that awful accent.”

“Oh yes,” said Yuna, “the ladies. It’s because they want to marry men from the mainland that they don’t use it.”¹

“Did someone say that to you?” Lulu asked her.

¹Gal, S. (1978). Peasant men can’t get wives: Language change and sex roles in a bilingual community. *Language in Society* 7:1–16.

“Yes,” said Yuna, “several times. They don’t want people knowing they’re from the island, so they force themselves to speak differently.” She turned towards Tidus, and explained, “People joke about Besaid. But I think it’s a lovely place.”

“Your father clearly thought the same,” Lulu mused. “He ordered that you should be brought up there after his passing: that’s what everyone says. The story’s become legend among the islanders – we’re all very proud of it. It brings in the tourists, too.”

“Yes,” said Yuna again. “But he also wanted me to speak Al Bhed, Lulu.”

“And we can’t always get what we want,” Lulu replied. “Some things are simply impractical. You couldn’t have grown up an Al Bhed speaker – first of all, nobody would have understood what you were saying.”

“She could’ve been bilingual,” said Tidus. “Dunno about you, but I’ve always wanted to be. Wouldn’t it be cool, being able to speak two languages? You could use one for talking about secret stuff, if you didn’t want anyone understanding you. And as well as that, they say it’s good for your brain if you can speak more than one language. Less chance of getting dementia when you’re older.”²

²Alladi, S. et al. (2013). Bilingualism delays age at onset of dementia, independent of education and immigration status. *Neurology* 81(22):1938–1944.

“Who are *they*?” said Lulu. “And dementia, well ... there’s no point worrying about that kind of thing here. Sin’s too much of a threat for anything else to matter.”

“It’s just a shame,” Tidus insisted. “I’d have really liked to grow up knowing about two different cultures at the same time.”

“Well, then,” said Lulu, “you can go and learn Al Bhed now, if you’re so interested. I’m sure there’ll be someone here in Luca who can teach you.”

“All right, then, I will,” said Tidus.

Lulu gave him a long, unimpressed look; then she walked away.

“Sounds like a good idea,” Yuna whispered, and she and Tidus exchanged a smile.