

CHARACTER PROFILE

ARABY ASTLEY

Aeroplane City — Chapter Seven, The Sade Café

Araby breaks the silence, “What are you thinking, Dalton?”

“That an air of class and distinction that in all my life eluded me is now held firm in this moment.” I surprised even myself thinking those thoughts aloud. Unwillingly my face expressed disappointment in myself as if to be examining myself from an outside perspective. It was a face of a trapped sigh I could not release. My breath held.

“On the surface, you show depth, Dalton.”

“An oxymoron,” I sigh unknowingly.

“Pardon?” She smiles.

“No go on please, I'm sorry for interrupting.”

“All right, I think you are a very unique person, Dalton. A rugged intellectual. If you will allow me to define you as such. I saw you from behind walking through the airport like a lion that walks proud in the fields you possess. Yes. I stepped in front of you. I was impressed and disappointed when you didn't react. Now I understand why. You know what romance is. For a man that must live a world of hard unfeeling decisions, you've exposed to me a man that embodies romance. I like that.” She says enthusiastically. “For one who says little, you say a lot. It leaves me to wonder. I want to explore your personality in the worst way.”

“What do you mean, Araby?” I wanted more.

Araby made a mocking face, “Where's your tragic back story?” We laughed in false bug-eyed shock then she continued. “I mean you have depth. I'm curious to know what kind of man you are to leave me with this train of thought? What would a man like that do for a living?”

“Well, Araby, this should be an irony. I'm a corporate mercenary of sorts.”

“So you're not a Zen rationalist.” she adds and we laugh momentarily.

I ruined the fun with the truth to sway the mood towards a conversation I can manage. “No, I'm a solo flyer. I do my job, muting my personal beliefs while I investigate and acquire companies. Lost hours spent culling data, analyzing and deciding risks. In the process I forge sudden relationships where my rapport becomes a tool few withstand, and then — I'm a guardian of secrets.” My answer brings the conversation back to a serious tone. It would be too easy to tell her I have friends in every city.

Araby was a step ahead. For my defiance in an attempt to avoid light conversation, I am immediately challenged. “This is a paradox. I see romance in you. Yet how can you live a life without meaning?” She asks.

She was winning this battle quickly coercing a swift reply. “My life is tied to meaning. Nothing evades my thinking. I see the future by reading the character of others. My instinct is always dialed to alert.”

“Poetically said Dalton. I like that. Oh now you really have my attention. You're not only handsome, now you're an intellectual peer.”

“How so Araby?”

“Let's just say that I've bumped up against too many self-indulgent people that throw the word 'integrity' around like a orphaned sock. You live in this world, observe the rules and still are your own man. Your looks are a paradox, hard and soft. You protect yourself with words like a spy hunter. But I could never see you in that line of work.”

“No?” I replied offering as if I may be lying. Then stated, “Spy hunters have no moral compass.”

Araby punched in, “No one in today's world has a moral compass.”