

THE wedding day was fast approaching and Lyra found herself more preoccupied than ever. At first, the guests had trickled into King's Landing one after the other.

The Velaryons were the first to arrive whom Brandon had been eager to meet for some reason. They had the blood of Old Valyria in their veins and Lyra knew them to be of close kinship with the Targaryens.

Then her other cousins came with the Stark's vassal houses, called to enter the tourney and hunt that would be held after the wedding. They had been a rowdy bunch of Northmen; Glovers, Umbers, Boltons, Cassels, Cerwyns and so forth.

Lyra was glad to see they had brought their lady wives and eldest children along with them. She felt that much more at home with them around.

Next were the other guests. Baratheons, Tyrells, Lannisters, Arryns, Tullies and all other Great Houses of the realm. Lyra would be whisked away to private boudoirs where the women would meet and greet one another with simpering pleasantries and innumerable gossip. Those nights had been exhausting.

Lyra examined herself in the looking glass. Silk of purest white flowed down her figure with pale blue winter roses adorning the bodice. It looked perfect. She turned around to admire the craftsmanship of the train, ruled fabric with more interweaving roses pooling around the floor.

"Maybe it would be better with a lower collar?" Aemma suggested.

"My heavens, is it not low enough?" exclaimed Ellis Cerwyn, Lyra's older cousin Benjen's lady wife.

"Now, Ellis," Gilliane admonished, "it is not unusual to wear lower collars where the weather is warmer in King's Landing."

"I thought that only Tyrells wore low collars," Ellis remarked, "as is their wont, you know..."

"You might want to try it for yourself," Aemma told her, watching as Lady Cerwyn fanned herself vigorously. "It is much warmer here than in the north, is it not?"

"Yes, quite, but I am only here for the wedding then back to the cold and our stiff collars," Ellis said.

Rhaenyra played with Lyra's hems. "I think it needs more roses."

Lyra smiled fondly at her. "I think more roses would be lovely."

After the seamstress fitted the dress closer to her figure (and lowered the collar), Lyra went behind the screen partition to change. She could hear the door to the morning chambers open and a maidservant informed that Rhaenyra's tutor had arrived.

"Aunt Lyra, let's go!" Rhaenyra called excitedly.

"Yes, one moment!" she responded, hurrying with her changing. Lyra put her usual emerald dress back on and emerged from the partition to a waiting Rhaenyra. "I shall see you later, Mother and Lady Ellis."

"Take care," the ladies bade her goodbye.

Aemma followed after Lyra and Rhaenyra as they walked hand in hand to the nursery. For the last month, she had snuck into her little niece's High Valyrian lessons. It had been daunting for Lyra at first, the language had sounded incredibly foreign to her ear. But after two weeks, she found herself easing into its rolling pronunciations and harsher consonants.

Though Lyra could not take all the credit for herself; the dragonkeeper Elder that taught them was an incredibly patient man. Most of the dragonkeepers hailed from across the Narrow Sea, where the blood of Old Valyria still walked and breathed.

She had been told that Valyrian was still spoken on that side of the world, though splintered and developing different dialects over the many years. The High Valyrian spoken by the Targaryens in Westeros was the purest form of the language that she knew of.

"It's *dārō nē not dārō nē*" Rhaenyra said, turning to her aunt.

Lyra furrowed her brows in concentration. "*Dārōne ... no, dārōne Dārōñe!*"

"Well done, my lady," the Elder praised her.

"*Aōha dārōñe!*" Lyra repeated. "To address the king, correct?"

Rhaenyra nodded proudly. "*Aōha ēngos iksis r̥rkta!*"

Lyra smiled, pleased with herself. "Why, thank you."

"*Sir bisa iksis skoriot ao ruaragon?*" A voice questioned from the entrance. They turned to find Daemon leaning against the door with an amused expression. Lyra felt her heart soar at the sight of him. They had not spent much time together between the wedding preparations and the guests.

"*Ziry jollōragon lēda nyke,*" Rhaenyra said to her uncle.

"*Kostagon ao tepagon z̥r̥ la arlī n̄ejoj nyke?*" Daemon asked.

"*Daor!*" Rhaenyra replied, grabbing hold of Lyra's arm. The older woman looked at the both of them in utter confusion. Though it must have been entertaining as both Aemma and the Elder were chuckling to themselves.

Daemon walked into the room with a playful demeanour. "*Yn eman iā irudy syt z̥r̥ la!*"

"*Skoros iksis ziry?*" Rhaenyra asked. The only thing Lyra could discern was that he had something for her.

He stopped in front of them and tapped the tip of his nose. "Well, it's supposed to be a surprise."

"I want to go too," Rhaenyra insisted.

"You need to finish your lessons first," Aemma told her sternly.

"Can it not wait?" the little princess whined.

Daemon laughed lowly. "We will bring you along next time. Now, I need to show your aunt something."

"Promise?" She held her pinky out to him and Daemon took it with his own. "You must tell me all about it tomorrow."

"Of course." Lyra laughed while gathering her hems to stand. Daemon offered a hand for help and she took it, pulling herself up to a stand. They bade each other goodbye before Lyra and Daemon left the nursery with arms locked.

Once alone together, Lyra turned to him with bright eager eyes. "What is this surprise you speak of now?"

He was beaming widely as he led her down the familiar hallways to the gardens. The colonnade soon came into view. "Well, it's a surprise. You'll have to wait. I swear you are spending too much time with Rhaenyra."

"There is nothing wrong with that," Lyra said. "She is my dearest niece."

"What will happen when we have our own child?" he asked. "She will be so terribly lonely then."

Lyra exclaimed in shock and incredulity at his question. "You are getting ahead of yourself, my prince."

"It is less than a moon until I lawfully call you wife," he said, "then I will have you all to myself."

She pinched him. "Not in the open! You are embarrassing me!"

Daemon laughed, carefree and light as a feather. He always had enjoyed teasing her and she clicked her tongue in disapproval. They continued along the cobbled paths outside, strolling deep towards the cliffs. She recognised the stone steps they climbed with the weeping statues guarding on either side.

But instead of turning down the path she had before, he brought her along another trail that seemed to be new. She vaguely remembered that it used to be an unruly patch of forsythia and bluebells. They had been cleared to make way for a row of hedges and white roses. It led to a cloistered walkway that was carved into the cliffside below Maegor's Holdfast.

Along the walls stood statues of the Seven; the Father, Mother, Warrior, Smith, Maiden, Crone and the hooded Stranger. They soon reached the end of the passage and out onto an open lookout from the lower levels of the keep. She could hear the gulls overhead and the gentle lapping of the bay.

A gazebo stood there with tall pillars of white stone, silken drapes waving with the gentle breeze. There was a table and chairs and chaise for lounging. Flowering blossoms surrounded them, of lilac and violets and azure stars. A secret garden sequestered away from the fatalities of the world.

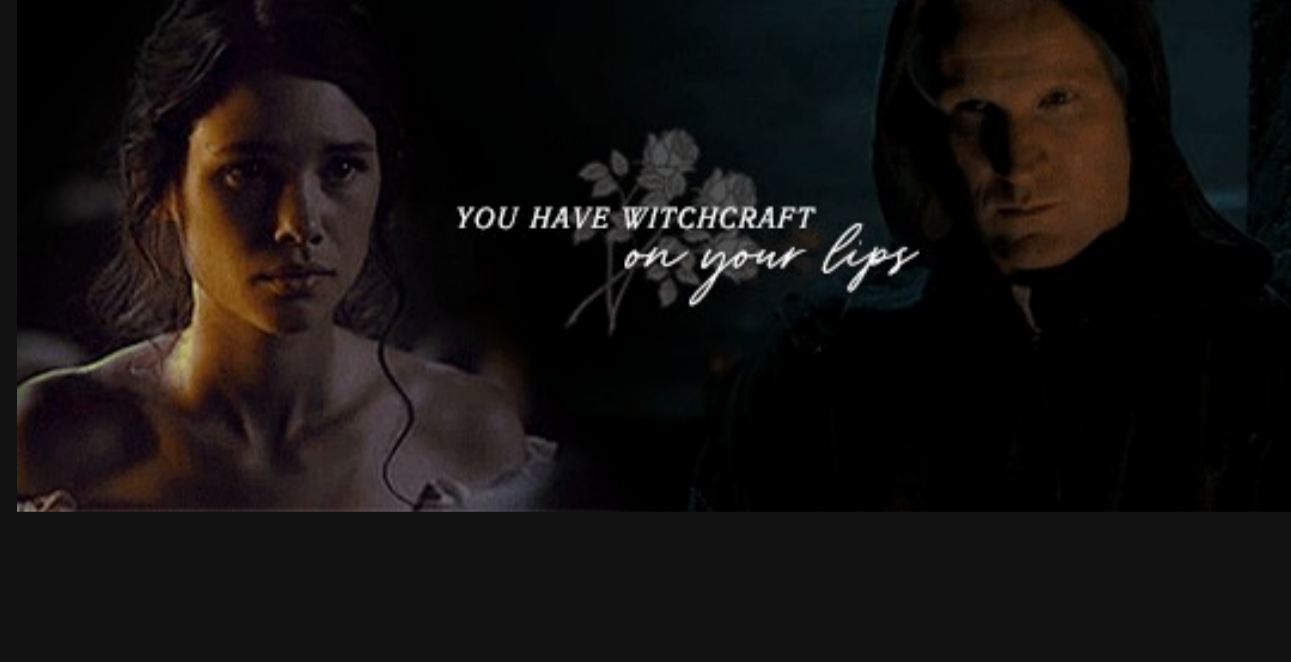
"You always admired it," Daemon said as he looked out at the horizon where the sun was beginning to set into the gloam. Streaks of heavenly fire and bleeding gold crowned the dying of the day with so rolling verse. "So now you have your very own refuge. On one condition, however..."

She turned to him, glittering silver like encroaching moonlight. "And what could that be?"

He brushed the flyaway locks from her face, tucking them behind her ear. Daemon looked at her like his entire life was written upon her face in starry shadows and smiled. "That you'll always come back to me."

She laughed and placed a hand on his cheek. "Always. It's beautiful, Daemon. Thank you."

With the eventide blooming behind them like vesper, Daemon kissed her delicately. Reverently. Like the whispered song of a forgotten dream.



AUTHOR'S NOTE

a bit of a long filler but i had to show daemon's surprise and i thought it was sweet :)) next chapter is gonna be the wedding, guys!



Translations:

Aōha dārōñe -Your grace

Aōha ēngos iksis r̥rkta -your tongue is better

Sir bisa iksis skoriot ao ruaragon? -so this is where you hide?

Ziry jollōragon lēda nyke she studies with me

Kostagon ao tepagon z̥r̥ la arlī n̄ejoj nyke? can i have her back?

Daor -no

Yn eman iā irudy syt z̥r̥ la -but i have a gift for her

Skoros iksis ziry? what is it?