

—* .C. *—

LYRA watched the hearth crackle, grey stone illuminated with reckless flames that danced with abandon. Licking with treacherous glee at the wood logs that bore them.

Fire was a fearsome beauty to behold. Much like the waters and the winds, each element beguiled and devastated at will. The ruin of kingdoms and entire civilizations, dynasties of kings and queens brought to heel.

Yet it also brought life, a so gasp in the wanton night. As pale as a radiant star of silver light.

Lyra felt a creature stirring in her chest, sharpening its claws as it lay in wake. As sharp as an executioner's axe.

The door to the solar opened so ly, footsteps shu ling across the threshold. She turned, green eyes peering through the long shadows spun by the eventide.

Viserys looked to her, then at Daemon who was seated by the miniature replica of Old Valyria. Balerion the Black Dread held between slender fingers.

A childhood dream that yearned to be made reality.

Could that be the reason, Lyra pondered, that Viserys claimed Balerion despite his great age so that he could relive the splendour of his ancestors' ruin. For one brief transient moment in the clouds. A young boy's folly, wrapped in naïveté. A wish that died before it had even been born.

"Your grace," she greeted him.

"Brother," Daemon echoed her sentiments.

"Lyra, Daemon." The king nodded to them. "Thank you for waiting. I was caught up with certain matters..."

He paused to take a seat next to Daemon, on the other side of the replica that jutted out to form an imposing entranceway. Neat rows of carven pillars and adjacent walls reminiscent of Old Volantis decorated it in lifeless white clay. He should have it painted black, like the halls of Dragonstone.

"I have a proposition to which I would like to know your answer," he continued.

"Well, that sounds interesting," Daemon commented. "What is it?"

"Corlys Velaryon was the one to suggest it to me, actually," Viserys told them coyly.

"And so the plot thickens," Daemon jested.

Lyra's lips started to tug upwards at her husband's tongue-in-cheek humour. "If it is from Lord Corlys then I fear to ask what it is."

Viserys chuckled. "Nothing so sinister, I assure you." He took another brief pause. "He suggested that I bring you into the small council, Lyra ... as mistress of whisperers."

Both husband and wife raised a quizzical brow at his words. Daemon was right; Corlys was an incorrigible egghead of a man.

"Now do not look at me like that," Viserys said. "I heard what you did, for the orphan boys and that whole mess with..." His voice trailed off uncertainly. "With the tailors"

Lyra grimaced slightly at the memories. She knew it was not his intent to dredge up the painful past, but it seemed inevitable. It would always be haunting her every footstep.

"She did what she had to do, Viserys," Daemon responded in a clipped manner. "It's not like she plans on doing it for a living." He turned to give a pointed glare at his brother for emphasis, driving his point home.

To utter futility as Viserys ignored him in turn. "I wish to hear Lyra's thoughts on the matter. It is her decision to make, after all."

"Is it your wish?" she asked him quietly. "As a brother, or as a king?"

Viserys pursed his lips in thought. "Can it not be both?"

She frowned. "Whichever little dove I kept all those years ago may no longer be there. I would need time to rebuild those connections. Besides, you have not needed the throne since you took the crown."

"Nor had grandfather," Daemon supplied.

"And all that time strife and schemes went unnoticed," Viserys pointed out. "I wish to continue grandfather's golden reign — one of peace and prosperity. How can I say that I have rightly done so when criminals strut on the streets in broad daylight?"

There was a noticeable shift in Lyra's demeanour as her eyes flicked to Daemon. He in turn had a violet gleam of his own. An unspoken accord sprung between them.

"Lyra had been quite acquainted with the City Watch in her previous dealings, isn't that right?" he mused aloud.

"And you are now Lord Commander of the City Watch?" Viserys looked between them. "Then all the better, is it not? A fortuitous coincidence."

"Alright..." Lyra started slowly. "Let's say I accept the position for now."

"Then it is settled," Viserys said. "I do not doubt that you will do well."

"Are you insinuating something, brother?" Daemon questioned saucily.

"Spy work too is a valued skill that not many possess," Viserys responded curtly.

Lyra had to bite back her laugh at their bickering. The brothers always did enjoy riling each other up, Daemon more so than Viserys. She folded her hands in front of her politely. "There is something else," she started. "I too, have my own proposition to be made."

Viserys looked at her with interest. "Do not keep me in suspense."

Her smile threatened to break into a grin as she glanced at Daemon. He raised his brows in anticipation, already knowing what she would say. "I would like to propose a betrothal ... between Baelor and dear Rhaenyra."

The king chuckled. "Does it even need to be said? I doubt they would have it any other way, either, knowing my daughter. They are very fond of each other, aren't they?"

"They are as thick as thieves," Daemon remarked.

"Well, for formality's sake," Lyra said. "She is your firstborn, after all."

"I am delighted by the arrangement," Viserys said. "I speak for both Aemma and I that we have thought of it many times before."

Lyra turned back to the hearth, a wistful glow reflected in her clear spring eyes. The hour was growing late, the sun losing its vigour as it descended the heavens. Against a blazing sky of violent crimson and indigoes, she told them, "I had a dream once, before Baelor was born. I heard a beautiful song that was older than time itself. Of ice and fire."

She returned her gaze to the men, almost missing the blanch on Viserys' face as he stared back. The gloom almost swallowed him whole as he sat unmovingly, his silhouette seemingly frozen to the chair.

Daemon then said, "That reminds me that we should probably visit Winterfell soon. Your father must be beside himself waiting for your return."

Her eyes lit up at the mention of it. The thought of home sent a warm comforting flush through her chest. "I would like that very much."

He stood from his seat, stretching his muscles lightly in the process. "Well, it has been a good talk, brother. Let us leave so that the servants can light some candles, it is awfully dark in here."

Viserys roused from his reverie, looking at them as if for the first time. "Yes ... yes, good night."

Daemon wrapped an arm around Lyra's waist and gently pulled her towards the door. But she could feel Viserys' lingering stare on her as they walked out. At the back of her mind, she wondered why that was.

Later that night, Lyra went to see her children only to find them already sound asleep. All three of them in the same bed. They must have played themselves to exhaustion. Even though both Vaegon and Alyse had beds of their own, they insisted on sleeping with Baelor on most nights. The only times they were apart would be if one of them got into a little spat with the other.

She approached the bed quietly, pulling the covers over their shoulders and tucking it under their chins. The round bulge of their dragon eggs nestled protectively between their arms. It took Baelor three whole days of careful deliberation to choose the eggs for his siblings. Freshly laid by Silverwing herself on the dragonmont.

The first was a brilliant crimson shot through with gold and bronze. Reminiscent of both Caraxes and Meleys, both dragons having been ridden by their father and grandmother before. This egg was for Vaegon.

The second was pitch black, darker than any moonless night, burnished with silver mist like a coat of stars. As if Balerion the Black Dread was reborn for little Alyse. The smallest of them and yet holding the fiercest of tempers.

As she watched them slumber, beads of unbidden tears fell down her cheeks. Five years she lamented. Enough time for a bumbling babe to grow into a child with dreams of his own. For a boy to become a man, and a son to reap the arduous joys of fatherhood.

Not wanting to wake them, Lyra went to leave the chambers to return to her own. She had thought that Daemon would still be in his cabinet but she opened the door to his waiting arms. And he saw the stains on her face, moist and ruinous trails of regret. He held her with tender hands entwined with sorrow.

"What is wrong?" he asked so ly.

The creature in her chest sprung, burying its claws deep to rend itself apart. An agonising death befitting an ill-begotten thing. Wailing ruefully into a bitter void of its own making.

It ached and ached, a gaping chasm severing the two halves of her heart. Bleeding years of despondence and despair. Yearning for the day she could return, missing him so fervently that she would collapse into herself every starless night.

"I haven't told you," she said, voice thick with melancholy, "about everything, about what happened in Volantis."

"What of it?" His voice was a mere murmur in the heavy silence.

The tears continued to trickle. "I haven't told you about how I died"

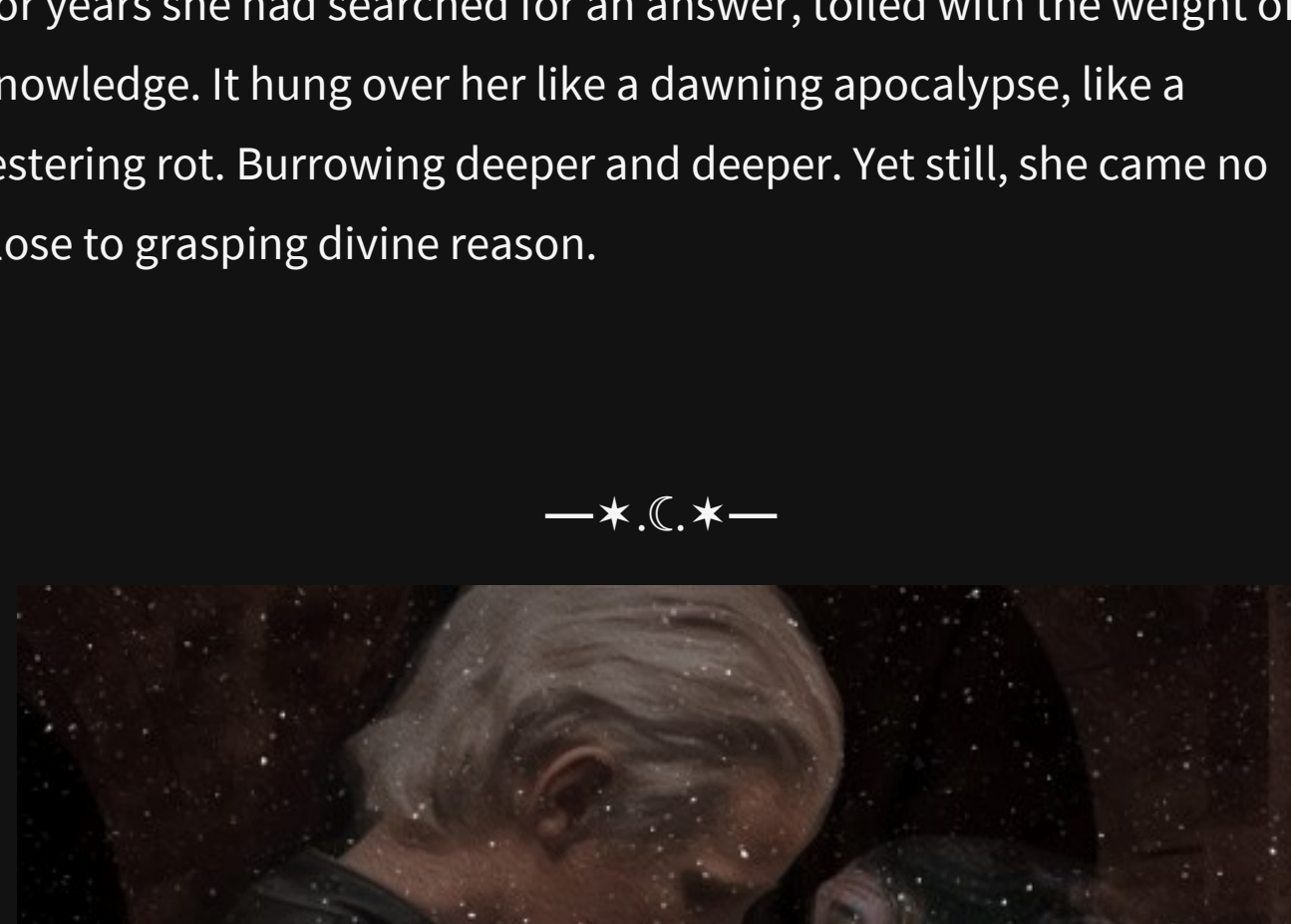
Violet eyes blinked in shock before clouding over with anguish and apprehension. His gaze flitted across her face searchingly. "Tell me."

"Daemon, I died." She peered at him, unable to stress it enough. "And the Lord of Light brought me back with sacred fire."

He frowned knowingly before whispering, "A kiss of life..."

For years she had searched for an answer, toiled with the weight of its knowledge. It hung over her like a dawning apocalypse, like a festering rot. Burrowing deeper and deeper. Yet still, she came no close to grasping divine reason.

—* .C. *—



AUTHOR'S NOTE

I started writing a happy chapter with daddy daemon but i wasn't feeling it so now we have minor angst. it's almost 5am, i need to go back to sleep Dx