



TO my esteemed good-cousin Corlys Velaryon Daemon wrote, scratching his quill against the parchment with vehemence. Lord of Drimark and the Tides, and the saltwater Cunts. Stop sending messages to my wife through a brothel, you obtuse egg.

There was an anxious knock and Daemon bade permission to enter. A knight opened the door and hovered by the threshold, dreading to perform his duty. "M-my prince..." he stammered.

"What is it?" Daemon snapped at him impatiently.

"T-the Lady Lyra, she—she was seen outside the Keep, m-my prince."

Daemon fixed the man with a hard stare. "And? Was Ser Elwyn not with her again?"

The ashen-faced knight looked at him with eyes that pleaded for mercy for what he was about to say. He swallowed hard. "The Lady Lyra ... she is ... she fell into Blackwater Bay."

Daemon's stony face turned into balement, then incredulity, before finally arriving at anger. He rose quickly from his seat with the intensity of a seething firestorm. "And how did that happen?" he demanded heatedly. "Where is she now?"

He was already gathering his sword and personal effects to leave before the knight was done. The poor man shied uneasily under the prince's rage. His voice was small when he responded, "My lord, she ... she could not be found."

Daemon turned on him with the ferocity of a beast, flaming breath and eyes of molten fury. "What do you mean she could not be found?" he yelled. "Where is Ser Elwyn?!"

The knight started to cower in fear. "H-He went in a er her but it was too late, my lord. He could not find her underneath the waters nor had she emerged from it."

Daemon froze. A terror seized him like none other before. He would rather face down a dozen irate dragons underneath the Dragonpit than this. His body turned cold. His breath laboured. He knew that Lyra could not swim.

"Where was she last seen?"

"At the harbour, my lord. I believe Ser Elwyn is still there lamenting."

Daemon bounded towards the door, his footfalls thundering against the stone floor in his haste. He damned the gods, damned the knights, damned Brandon Stark's memory. Daemon damned it all as he made his way to the stables for his horse.

The striking stallion of midnight shadows greeted him with a familiar whinny. Hailing from the northern reaches of his wife's own birth place. Dark Star, she had named him, to match Daemon's Valyrian sword. An ache bloomed in his chest at the memory.

He needed to see her, needed to believe that she would be waiting for him. Mounting his horse, he rode out of the keep with flying gallops. The streets were still haunted with nightly regulars, hindering and delaying him, until his patience ran short. The smallfolk scurried out of his way as he shouted at them from atop his horse.

Finally, the harbour came into view with its procession of resting sails and unmanned prows. He found Ser Elwyn knelt on the dock with his head bowed. His flaxen hair was plastered in strings across his face and neck. He had removed his armour which laid trodden upon the ground nearby, his clothes underneath dripping wet with freshwater.

Daemon grabbed him by the collar. "Where is she?"

Elwyn shook his head sorrowfully. "Punish me as you see fit, my lord, I take all responsibility. I have failed you as much as I failed her."

That was not what Daemon had wanted to hear. He threw the knight back onto the ground, resisting the urge to knock the man senseless. The glassy waters of the bay looked untouched, black and deep. He turned around, silver hair whipping in the air, and started to search the rest of the docks. The bay was big, she could have washed up somewhere else.

Daemon searched from dawn to dusk, through every nook and cranny. He asked every manner of smallfolk, young and old, birds and mice alike. Commanded every knight and man of the City Watch for word. They had all told him the same thing. The Lady Lyra Stark had fallen into the bay and into her watery grave.

He slammed his fist against the wooden beam of a tavern. Flecks of sawdust and splinters stuck to his skin. Twilight had started to descend on him as he was walking up the Street of Sisters. Elwyn should still have wits left about him to collect his horse on the way back. With every step forward, he felt his feet grow heavier with defeat. The Red Keep loomed silently in front of him like a waiting judge.

Broken, bereft and heart cloven in two. He felt an ache in his chest that burned as palpably on his flesh as it did within. Withering with a ruinous poison, thick and acerbic.

The knights looked on helplessly as he returned to the keep, the shade of its cool stone walls relieving his weather-beaten skin. Silver hair tousled, eyes hollow. He heard the approach of frantic footsteps. Small silken feet that had been lying in wait.

Velvet hands grasped the sleeves of his shirt. Rhaenyra looked up at him with tear-stained cheeks and swollen eyes. "Tell me it is not true, uncle! Please tell me what they say is not true!" she wailed.

The night breeze laughed cruelly as it nicked his skin, sending a chill through his bones. Daemon placed his hands on her shoulders, almost falling to his knees in order to meet her eyes. He did not want it to be true either.

"Why do you not answer?" Rhaenyra pleaded, voice quaking. A heart-wrenching sound of broken lyre strings.

"Rhaenyra..." he could only muster. A weak response, but enough.

She started crying again in earnest, large beads of salted tears leaking down her scrunched face. Whimpers escaped her in an attempt to restrain her cries. She tried, he knew she was trying. But Lyra had been her sun, as much as she had been his moon and stars. He loved her, by the gods had he loved her with every aching breath he took.

"Why her?" Rhaenyra sobbed. "Why must it be her?"

Because the world was cruel. Because the gods scorned him. There was nothing Daemon could do or say except to hold her head against his shoulder in comfort.

And wept together.



A GAME OF CHOICES

so obviously Lyra is not actually dead or else there wouldn't be an act two lmao, i'm letting you guys choose:

do you want to see lyra fight in the stepstones with daemon?

i'll count those cute little comment emojis as a vote too if you wanna see it happen. i won't spoil her but i did have something in plan for her and i definitely wanted her to be directly involved in the dance with daemon somehow and not just an observer. but no, unfortunately she won't be riding her own dragon or direwolf into battle HAHA otherwise, it will be ages until they see each other again.

also, it's yo girl's birthday today i ate so much, i fell asleep. then i woke up to edit this chapter and now i'm sleepy again. btw i had this chapter pre-written for literal ages in my draft and it legit made me cry when i was writing it. readers who've been reading since the beginning know that i wasn't sure whether i would be continuing this story into hotd but inspo struck and now i am. let me know your thoughtsss xx

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