

“PEVALIAN  
SUNSET”

Written by:

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**Happy Belated Birthday Present Rebecca!!**

It was a slightly overcast day, the time just before noon. Cyriac and Gauwyn rode towards the city cathedral on the eastern embankment of the River Gaul. They both wore chain mail with a kings crested garment over top. Long swords hung from the side of their mounts, their horses armored with hard stitched leather.

Cyriac was the son of a peasant from the west sector of the city. He was raised by his father to be what he has become, a knight. He is only twenty-one, well built with shoulder length, curly brown hair. He has one truly unique feature about him, and that is his birthmark on the side of his nose. Some call it a blessing while others think of it as a curse.

Gauwyn was the same age as Cyriac, but of a completely different lineage, for he was the heir to the throne of Lanswick, the last free kingdom in Pevalia. His father was King Thomas Ansley III. Since the beginning of knighthood over four years ago he and Cyriac had been best friends. They trained and fought side-by-side looking out for one another, as brothers would do.

Today was one of the many days that they could relax though. The war in the east had come to a halt, the invasion seemingly over, although no confirmed letter from the kingdom of Indarial. Cyriac and Gauwyn were out for a nice early day ride that Gauwyn seemed to be leading the way. The path they rode was separated from the river by a lining of tall seasonal trees, their leaves full and bright green. To the north the riverbank turned into a hill that overlooked most of Lanswick. Upon the hill is the Dorvina Cathedral, the pride and treasure of Lanswick. Sun glistened off of the enormous stained glass windows.

Neither Cyriac nor Gauwyn was talking; they were just enjoying the fresh summer air. They neared the Cathedral's stone path when the bells tolled noon. Gauwyn smiled at the bells and stopped his horse. Cyriac realized that Gauwyn had stopped and made his horse walk back a few steps to fall in along side Gauwyn.

"I never knew you to show interest in the cathedral, Gauwyn," Cyriac remarked. Gauwyn kept his eyes fixed upon the massive oak cathedral doors.

"No interest in cathedrals, Cyriac. Just wait and you will see why I led us here."

And so they waited as the flood of peasants rushed forth and dispersed. When there were but a few peasants remaining, there was one that stood out among them.

Cyriac's eyes were drawn to her as a thief is drawn to treasure. She was walking directly towards them. She stood at least a full head's height lower than Cyriac would, her eyes seductive but overall appearance not what most would call beautiful. Yet Cyriac found her very cute, maybe it was just the way the light shone through the trees and made her light brown hair shimmer behind her face. He noticed, as she got closer, that she was a little chubby, but he didn't care. His eyes were drawn to hers.

"Good day, Dionisia," Gauwyn said, snapping Cyriac back from his daydream.

"Hello, Prince Gauwyn," she replied and bowed and stood firm before them.

"Who's your friend?" she asked and smiled at Cyriac.

Cyriac was unable to make reply. His lips trembled at the beauty that illuminated from within her smile. He felt like a total idiot. Meanwhile Dionisia continued to smile and look at him with a flattering look.

Gauwyn leaned over in the saddle and hit Cyriac's shoulder with the back of his hand. "This is my long time friend, Cyriac," he answered.

Dionisia curtsied, "pleased to meet you Cyriac."

Pleased to meet you also... Dion...Dionisia," Cyriac stuttered. He could feel his face turning red. Dionisia stood up from her curtsy and giggled at Cyriac's reddening face.

She looked back to Gauwyn. "So what are you two boys off to do?"

"We were getting some fresh air." Gauwyn looked at Dionisia, a smile in his eyes. She smiled back at him with her face. He thought to himself a moment and continued, "but now I must be off to the palace and see my father. Something about the continuance of war, but I'm sure Cyriac would be happy to keep you company this afternoon." He looked at Cyriac in a way that Cyriac knew to be his 'do it or else' look.

"Of course, Gauwyn," Cyriac said as he always did to those eyes.

"Excellent, then I shall catch up with you two later." Gauwyn kicked his heels into the horses side and was off as Dionisia bowed.

Cyriac's face was still blushed. Dionisia came around to the side of his horse and rubbed its neck behind the armored headpiece. She looked up at Cyriac with a smile. Cyriac decided to dismount from his horse and nearly got his foot stuck in the stirrup. He regained his grip on the saddle and reigns and managed to save himself an

embarrassment. Dionisia was right next to him, which made him nervous. He stood almost a complete head over her.

“So, Sir Cyriac, what shall we do?” her eyes searching his for answers into what he was. Cyriac had to look away to speak.

“How about a walk over to Westside? We can go to the park with the fountains.” It was the only place he could think where he would feel more comfortable. He spent a lot of time in that park growing up. It was close to home and close to the Inn where his mother worked.

Dionisia bit her lower lip. “As you wish, but you must let me ride the horse.” She blinked her eyes a few times and continued to bite her lower lip.

Cyriac’s heart melted away and kneeled to help her get on the horse. He braced his hands for her foot and lifted her to the stirrup. He then grasped her hips to push her up. Dionisia started to giggle as the touch tickled her and Cyriac nearly dropped her. She let out a little scream and was answered by Cyriac throwing her onto the horse. Cyriac was very embarrassed now and grabbed the reins. He started to lead the horse back to the south.

They went on a few miles before reaching a bridge that crossed the river at a narrow point. Not a word had been exchanged since the cathedral. They reached the peak of the bridge and descended towards the Westside of Lanswick. It was known as the poor and industrial side. Only the rich, holy and the king lived on the eastside. Smoke billowed from many houses. Another road lay parallel to the river on the west side of the river. Cyriac led the horse to the north, passed some of the better-looking houses in the west.

“You always do as the prince says?” Dionisia asked of Cyriac’s reply to Gauwyn earlier.

“He is the prince,” Cyriac deferred.

“Do you not like me?” Dionisia asked with a hint of sadness in her voice.

Cyriac felt guilty now, as the question had intended. “What do you mean?” he instantly sent forth.

“You haven’t said a word to me since the cathedral until just now.”

“I’m sorry; I don’t mean to be quiet. I’m not used to talking to girls,” Cyriac said. He looked back at Dionisia and gave an awkward smile.

“Good, because I’m no girl, I’m a lady,” Dionisia said half insulted. She held her head high with a straight back in the saddle.

Cyriac took the horse to the left along a wider street. Clanging from the smith shops rang out clear, laughter from the bars. Early drinking was not uncommon in the city, especially on the Westside.

“Very well, I’m not used to talking to ladies,” Cyriac corrected.

“Maybe you could start by asking questions about me,” Dionisia suggested.

“Can we get to the park first? It will be nicer,” Cyriac said a little aggravated. He didn’t like being forced to talk. He was a very quiet person and liked to keep to himself. Dionisia didn’t try to get him talking any more.

They arrived at the park in the center of Westside. The entrance made apparent by the large iron arch with an intricate weave of flowers leading to the angelic figure at the top. The fence surrounded the park with tall iron bars with small spaces between. Trees filled the park, the grass nicely cropped. Patches of flowers were dispersed randomly among the trees and in the center of the park lay a giant water fountain with the statue of the first King Ansley with a foot raised on stone, his sword used as a resting stick for his hands.

Dionisia dismounted from the horse at the entrance with Cyriac’s help. Cyriac pulled the horse over to the wooden bar to tie it down. He walked back to Dionisia and began walking into the park. Dionisia fell into stride beside him.

Cyriac became more relaxed now. He felt comfortable here. He looked up at the trees, the overcast clouds drifting by beyond their shade providing canopy. Birdsong was scattered throughout yet rhythmically in tune. Cyriac walked to one of the many stone benches surrounding the fountain and took a seat. Dionisia sat next to him. Throughout the park were people walking and sitting, children running around chasing each other.

Dionisia watched the children run around and a smile returned to her face. She asked softly, “are you from Westside?”

Cyriac was also watching the children in the park. “Yes, very close by actually.” He pointed towards the south side of the park. “Just on the other side of those houses.”

Dionisia followed the direction of his hand and said, “you’re joking?” To which Cyriac shook his head. “I live there too. Funny we should not have met until today.” She looked at Cyriac. Cyriac was still watching the children running around. “You should come to dinner.”

Cyriac tried to look at her questioningly but her eyes trapped him and he could only reply, “I would like that.”

“Good,” Dionisia said getting up and took Cyriac’s hand in hers. He followed as she dragged him into the trees. She led him to a spot in the grass where there was nobody around and she pulled him to the ground next to her. She lay back staring at the trees. Cyriac nervously lay down next to her; she was still holding his hand and despite his nervousness he didn’t want to let go.

“So what made you become a knight?” Dionisia asked while still looking at the trees. Her whole face seemed to be smiling in the park, even in the shade.

Cyriac looked at her profile, unable to help himself. “Well, my family isn’t rich as I’m sure you can tell since we live out here. My father was a respected smith apprentice and my mom stayed at home to take care of me.” Dionisia turned to look at him as he spoke. “When my father started his own smith works the first thing he forged was a sword for me. He told me if nothing else, that sword was to be his token of love and acknowledge his attempt at providing for his family. I was twelve then, and the first battles were taking place in the east. Knights were traveling from all corners of Lanswick to answer the call of the king. I watched them from my window as they rode and walked towards the castle. They all had a sword sheathed at their wastes. I remember picking up the sword my father had made for me for the first time and thinking it was lighter than it should have been. Then I ran downstairs and into the street to my father’s shop where he was beginning to forge some armor. The look of amazement on his face at how I had lifted the sword so easily made it all the clearer and I told him: ‘I’m going to become a knight.’ And here I am.” Cyriac smiled at the last words. He was a knight of a few years now all thanks to his father.

“It’s like a fairy tale,” Dionisia responded to his story. “Tell me, where is that sword?”

Cyriac pulled out the sword at his waste and held it above him, its hilt to his stomach, the blade swaying in the air. “It has never left my side,” Cyriac answered proudly. He put it down on the grass next to him. “What path have you chosen?” he asked turning back to her.

It was one of the rare instances where Dionisia’s smile faded. “I haven’t decided yet,” she said, her smile fading completely. “My mom wants me to consider being a priestess at the cathedral or even a nun at the monastery. I feel I can be more than that you know?” Her eyes wondered off into the trees again. “Why waste my time doing something that forbids me from falling in love? I want to have a family and go places.”

“Can you not forsake the title of priestess or nun should you find yourself falling in love?” Cyriac asked.

Dionisia turned back to him and for the first time he saw a hint of ferocity in her. “If one forsakes their title in either of those two roles they are considered deserters and outcast from the city, never to be heard from again.” Cyriac frowned at her response. “That’s what makes it so hard to decide,” Dionisia concluded, “they are both respectable titles but both forsake me from another life.”

“One must make many difficult decisions in life. One like the one you have before you are no easy task but do not let your mother’s wishes sway your decision. It is your life to decide,” Cyriac said and got back to his feet. He let go of Dionisia’s hand and sheathed his sword. “I will escort you home, Dionisia.”

They walked beyond the west side of the park through the strips of housing. Cyriac pointed ahead to the left. “There is where I live, above that smith shop.”

Dionisia was back to her smiling self. She pointed right across from the smith shop, “and I live right across from you. Ironic that we should not have met until only now,” she looked at Cyriac, “don’t you think?”

“Horribly so,” Cyriac replied half laughing. They stopped in front of her house. “I shall see you at sunset.” He took a knee and kissed the back of her hand, “fare thee well great lady,” Cyriac said jokingly.

Dionisia blushed a little, “bye,” was all she said and took her hand back and frolicked into her home. Cyriac lingered a moment and turned back to his own place of upbringing.

He walked through his father’s smith shop and tipped his head low when his father made eye contact. His father grinned and raised a hand to him, then returned to pounding on steel.

There were four places set at the table. Dionisia waited patiently by the window, wearing a green gown, for Cyriac to show up. She could see his place clearly. The coals were burning red hot in his father’s smith shop. She could make out the shadow of someone coming out through the door. Then the shadow moved beyond the coal pit and into the street. Dionisia went to the door and opened it. There she waited as Cyriac lumbered across the street. He wasn’t wearing his armor anymore, but he still had the sword.

Cyriac stopped by the door. He was wearing a blue tunic with loose brown, cloth pants. His hair was still loose and wild, but he had cleaned up. “You are looking wonderful, Dionisia,” he commented.

Dionisia stepped back to allow him entry, “and you are looking more like a peasant, how quaint.” She giggled and bit her lip. “I see the sword holds true.”

Cyriac undid the belt with the sword, “I don’t wear it to the dinner table,” and he placed it by the door.

Dionisia looped her arm through Cyriac’s and led him to the table. She sat him down at the end closest to the door and took a seat to his left side. Her mother entered with a pot of stew and placed it in the center of the table.

Dionisia stood up. “Mother, this is Cyriac, a knight of the king. Cyriac, this is my mother.”

Cyriac stood up and bowed his head, “it is a pleasure to meet you misses...?”

“Mrs. Siveren,” Dionisia’s mother answered, “and pleased to meet you Cyriac. My daughter tells me you have lived across the street all this time.”

“That is correct, Mrs. Siveren,” Cyriac answered as he sat back down, “and where is Mr. Siveren this evening?” silence. Cyriac swallowed hard, afraid he may have asked something he shouldn’t have. “I’m sorry; did I ask something I shouldn’t have?”

Dionisia didn't look upset, just worried. She looked at her mother and back to Cyriac. "Our father was a knight to the king for many years. He died fighting on the eastern front just before the fighting stopped. It was at his funeral where I met Prince Gauwyn."

Cyriac thought for a moment. The last name was unfamiliar to him. "What was your father's name?"

It was Mrs. Siveren that answered, "Sir Andrew."

Cyriac's eyes opened wide for a brief moment. "Gauwyn and I fought with him for a time, months ago. It is a shame he wasn't given leave when we were, he was a good man."

"Thank you," Mrs. Siveren said, "that is kind of you to say so." She seemed to liven up a little from Cyriac's words. "Now if you don't mind the stew is getting cold." She scooped up the stew into bowls she had stacked on the table and handed the first bowl to Dionisia who in turn handed it to Cyriac. Then Dionisia took her own and lastly Mrs. Siveren.

Cyriac waited, expecting someone to say grace, but Dionisia and her mother began to eat right away.

"Do you not like it?" Dionisia asked him only half way through her spoonful of stew.

"Oh no, not that," Cyriac defended, "I just thought that one might say grace."

"We don't say grace in this house anymore, Cyriac," said Mrs. Siveren, "not since Thomas was taken from us. One can only be thankful and pray for so much."

Cyriac didn't press any further and began to eat. The meal went on in silence, Cyriac wondering how a mother that seems to have turned her back on the religion that their foundation was built could possibly want her daughter to become so deep in it. It was better not to interfere though, he was not one to sway ones ways.

It was very late when Cyriac got up from a seat by the fire to leave. "I must be going back. I have a training session in the morning. My deepest thanks for your hospitality this evening Mrs. Siveren," Cyriac said. He bowed low in respect.

"You are welcome, Cyriac. It will be nice to see you again," Mrs. Siveren said smiling.

“Likewise,” he replied.

Dionisia got up from her seat, “I will walk you out, Cyriac,” she insisted and walked with him to the door.

Cyriac grabbed his sword and pulled the door open. He stepped out into the street and turned around. Dionisia was standing right in the doorway.

“Well, sir knight,” she said as a jest, “will we see you again on the ‘morrow?” She leaned herself forward holding onto the doorframe. Cyriac leaned back to avoid contact.

“If my lady wishes it,” Cyriac put forward. He decided to step forward. It was Dionisia this time that pulled back to avoid contact.

“Your lady does, by the river to the south, after noon,” Dionisia said with a grin and as was common, bit her lower lip.

“Until then, I bid you adieu,” Cyriac took up her loose hand gently and kneeled down. He kissed it softly and in a swift motion was standing and heading back across the street.

Dionisia lingered in the doorway and sighed. She had hoped for something more but at the same time was hoping he was just playing hard to get. She went back in and leaned against the door as she closed it. She looked to the ceiling and smiled.



Cyriac was up early that morning. The sun was just above the horizon promising a warm day. He rode through the quiet streets and along side the river. He went to the northern bridge and crossed near the castle. On the other side of the bridge Prince Gauwyn was waiting.

“You are early this morning, Cyriac,” Gauwyn remarked. He turned his horse and rode alongside Cyriac.

“It is a good morning, I was feeling more awake than usual,” Cyriac said with a smile.

“My apologies for leaving you alone with Dionisia yesterday. It turns out there was more to discuss than my father had initially decreed,” Gauwyn looked at Cyriac and saw that he had his attention. “War has returned in the east.”

Cyriac was concerned. He didn’t want to go back so soon. They had returned but a few weeks ago and he was enjoying his time back in Lanswick.

“The chances are good you won’t be sent, Cyriac,” Gauwyn had a big smile now; “I have been named commander of the city guard. My father knows you are my right hand man, you should be thankful.”

“Of course,” Cyriac said, “I am. And congratulations, I can’t think of a knight more deserving.”

Gauwyn leaned over in his saddle and gave Cyriac a hearty pat on the shoulder, “I can think of one.” Gauwyn leaned back up in his saddle, “now tell me, how was the day yesterday? Details man.”

Cyriac wasn’t too keen on providing them but Gauwyn was his best friend. Who else better to confide in? “Well we went to the park in the west end. It turns out she has lived across from me all these years and we had never met.” Cyriac saw Gauwyn’s face become more interested. “She then asked me to dinner and we spent the evening talking. That was it.”

“Dinner? Dinner is never it, Cyriac,” Gauwyn jested. “I think she likes you.” Gauwyn disguised his jealousy with a smile. “Just be careful, she may weaken your will to fight, and I can’t have my best knight performing sub par.”

“Have I ever?” Cyriac challenged.

“Never,” Gauwyn defended, “but you’ve never been with a woman before either,” and at that Gauwyn kicked his horse into a gallop passed the castle towards the fields.

Cyriac kicked his horse and followed.

The day had clouded over during the morning training. Cyriac rode north along the west side of the river as Dionisia had said to do. He passed the outskirts of wooden housing beyond the city roads. Farmlands started to encroach on him. Up ahead he could make out a patch of trees that the path swerved to avoid. There was an old barn with plant growth all around. Out from behind the bushes stepped Dionisia. She was wearing a

dark dress of sturdy material. Her hair down as it was the day before. Cyriac dismounted mid gallop and slowed the horse down as he neared her.

Dionisia stepped forward, “glad you made it,” she said smiling. She took Cyriac’s free hand in hers and led him through the bushes behind the barn. The grass was well kept behind the barn. The trees were fare sized and would have provided shade if the sun were still shining. Cyriac tied the horse to a tree near the barn and let Dionisia lead him towards the river.

“Does this not belong to anyone?” Cyriac asked of the land they were trespassing on.

“Not for some time now,” Dionisia said and stopped near the riverbank. The spread of the river was wide here; the current didn’t seem to flow at all. “Do you swim, Cyriac?” she asked joyously.

Cyriac looked at the water and frowned a little. “I’ve never been taught to swim.”

Dionisia didn’t let that stop her, “then I shall have to teach you how,” and before Cyriac could answer she took off her dark dress and was left in only her light gown. She ran down to the river and splashed in. “Oh come on, it isn’t deep here. I won’t let you drown,” she shouted to Cyriac.

Cyriac tried to keep from looking at her. The wet fabric of her gown was rather revealing and he was embarrassed to look. Finally he gave in and took off his armor. Down to his undergarments, Cyriac made his way to the water and waded in to his waste. Dionisia swam up to him and stood in the water next to him.

Cyriac was scared of the water. He didn’t mind a bath, but being in the river or a lake was different. Here he was surrounded by water and could be fully submerged. He was uncomfortable in a situation he couldn’t control, and he could not control the water. Even with someone with him Cyriac was uncomfortable, mainly by the assumption that Dionisia wouldn’t be able to support his weight should something happen to him.

Dionisia took his hand in hers. “Just let your legs float up, I won’t let go,” she said comfortingly. She placed her other hand on his back for support.

Cyriac hesitantly let his legs leave the bottom of the river and felt a wonderful sensation as his legs lifted to the surface and he floated there as if suspended in the heavens, staring at the clouds. Then raindrops began to fell, spattering on his face as he

turned to look at Dionisia with a glowing happiness. The rain fell harder, faster and soon became a torrential downpour. Lightning split the western sky and an ear-shattering clap of thunder shook the foundations Pevalia.

Cyriac struggled to put his feet back on the river bottom and took Dionisia's hand. He led her back to the shoreline, "we should find shelter. The lightning is getting close." Just then another bolt of lightning struck just west of Lanswick. The thunder resonated through the city and Cyriac and Dionisia collapsed to the ground as they covered their ears.

Cyriac could see Dionisia's lips mouthing *'to the barn'* but he couldn't hear for temporary deafness from the thunder. It was her who now led Cyriac as they ran for the old barn. They ripped through vines and bushes to clear the rotting door. They both pulled the door aside and went in.

Light poured through the cracks in the wood and the roof was scattered with numerous leaks. Cyriac looked around as he walked in. Shadows bounced around in all sizes. He stopped an old stack of dry hay. He fell backwards on it breathing deeply. Dionisia lay down next to him, their eyes locked on one another. For a minute they just stared at each other breathing, not saying a word.

Cyriac turned towards Dionisia and her to him. Then Cyriac's arms were around her, his lips upon hers. Dionisia pulled his head down upon hers as they kissed passionately. They continued to caress and kiss one another and then Dionisia started to lift off Cyriac's shirt. Cyriac stopped kissing and rolled off of her. They were both breathing hard.

"What's wrong? You don't like me?" Dionisia asked with a sense of sadness.

Cyriac swallowed and turned his head to see her. He placed his hand on hers, "that's just it. I like you a lot, but I'm just not ready." He leaned in and kissed her cheek, "I'm sorry."

Dionisia turned to him and they stayed in that barn for a long time just holding one another as the storm passed by and the day grew dark.

They emerged from the barn and retrieved their shed clothes, now soaked through. Dionisia wrung her dress out and struggled to put it back on. Cyriac gently pulled it down over her body as it stuck. Cyriac just wrapped them up and held them in

the crook of his arm. He helped Dionisia onto the horse and began to walk it back towards the Westside along the riverbank.

Back in the Westside they stopped outside of Dionisia's house and Cyriac helped her down from the horse. "Goodnight, Dionisia," Cyriac said and kissed her lips gently.

She hugged him and went inside. Cyriac lingered a moment longer and led his horse down the street towards the stable.

In an alley in the distance a shadowy figure loomed, hooded, his face hidden. It ducked back into the alley and all was silent save the horse that Cyriac led.



Gauwyn entered the council chamber. His father, Thomas Ansley, was conversing with one of his commanding officers at the large wooden table. Before them lay a map of Pevalia and the neighboring kingdoms. King Thomas was moving his finger along the borders of Pevalia and Indarial as Gauwyn leaned on the table.

The king looked up and smiled, "good of you to join us son. We are discussing our plan for the border. A messenger confirmed another attack to the south at the village of Colbury," Thomas pointed to a mark on the map southeast of Lanswick. Then he pointed to a village north of it, "the cavalry at Tentock are holding strong. We have decided to send a legion, three hundred strong, to Colbury later today. Our people will not be abandoned."

Gauwyn thought to himself as he processed the tactic. "How large is the army attacking Colbury?"

The commander's eyes met Gauwyn's gaze, "it is unknown. They attacked during the night. The messenger said it was a rain of fire, nothing more."

Gauwyn looked to his father. "Send Cyriac with your legion. He is one of our best."

King Thomas was a little shocked by this. He stood up, back straight. "You and he are equally matched, Gauwyn," he said with a smile. Then his smile disappeared, "would you so quickly send your friend back to war? He was to be your second in command of the city guard."

“Put him in charge of your legion. Cyriac has proven himself time and again to be a skillful swordsman and to have half a brain with tactics,” Gauwyn persisted. He leaned up from the table, “trust me father,” and with a face too serious Gauwyn turned and left the council chamber.

King Thomas turned to the commander, “you will excuse me,” and he took off after his son.

King Thomas caught up to Gauwyn near the balcony overlooking Lanswick. He put a hand on Gauwyn’s shoulder and pulled him to a halt.

Gauwyn faced his father. “What is it?” he asked harshly.

“It is not like you to send your friend away from you. What are you thinking? There’s more than just his skill to this,” King Thomas read in his son.

Gauwyn was flustered. He went to the rail of the balcony and looked to Westside. “There is more. I love the girl I introduced him to,” Gauwyn grumbled. He glared towards the Westside and leaned his forearms on the rail.

King Thomas came up next to him and rested a hand on the rail and put the other on his sons shoulder. “You ask me to play a dangerous game, Gauwyn, and should Cyriac feel the same for this girl his retribution will be with you. When Cyriac returns, it is you that must deal with him, and I will not interfere. You are my son, but one should not play with another’s heart, especially when that person is a friend such as you have,” King Thomas said softly with a lot of emotion. He patted his son’s shoulder a few times and started to walk away.

“So you will do it?” Gauwyn asked sternly and turned to his father.

King Thomas kept walking away from his son and disappeared into another corridor.

Gauwyn stood there considering his father’s words but a moment. It was what he wanted and with Cyriac out of the way he could pursue Dionisia as intended.

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Cyriac sat in his room for the better part of the morning. He thought about what to do about Dionisia. He really liked her and knew that he would have to show it more through

action than words. Things were always harder for him when he was afraid, and love was something he was afraid to express for fear of what it would do.

In the early hours of the afternoon he walked to the park where he and Dionisia had first really exchanged words. He went to where they had lain side by side in the grass to find a single flower in bloom. The light of day reached it through a gap in the trees and framed it. The center was blood red with white and goldenrod petals. Cyriac looked around; there was nobody near him. He plucked the flower at the base and left the park.

Cyriac returned to the street where he and Dionisia lived and walked to her door. He knocked on it three times. Dionisia's mother opened the door.

"Good afternoon, Cyriac," Mrs. Siveren greeted and bowed to the knight before her.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Siveren. Is your daughter at home?" Cyriac asked. His hands were behind his back hiding the flower from her.

"She is," Mrs. Siveren stepped back from the door, "please, come in."

Cyriac stepped inside and Mrs. Siveren closed the door. "Thank you," Cyriac said and bowed to her.

"She is in her room if you'd like to go to her," Mrs. Siveren offered and pointed up the stairs.

Cyriac maneuvered his hands to conceal the flower from Mrs. Siveren and made his way up the stairs. His feet fell hard on the wooden steps. He reached the middle platform and turned up the remaining steps beyond Mrs. Siveren's sight.

Dionisia was sitting on her bed knitting when Cyriac pushed her door open. "May I come in?" he asked.

Dionisia smiled, "you may."

Cyriac entered and bent down to kiss Dionisia on the lips. Then he knelt on the floor in front of her. "I have something for you," he said nervously.

Dionisia regarded him and waited.

"I went to where we lay down in the park the other day and found it in full bloom," Cyriac slowly brought his left hand out from behind his back and handed the

flower to her. “They are extremely rare this far north. I wanted you to have it as a little something of us.”

Dionisia looked at the flower in disbelief as she shakily reached her hand towards it. Cyriac took her hand the rest of the way and placed the stem in her palm. Then he curled her fingers around it.

“It is absolutely beautiful, thank you, Cyriac,” she said with a tear in her eyes. She put her knitting materials down on the bed and lowered herself to the floor. She wrapped her arms around Cyriac and hugged him.

Cyriac looked at the open window and could see his house across the street. The regular sounds of people, carts and the clang of steel and iron from his fathers shop came in. Then the hammering of metals stopped and Cyriac could hear a distinct voice of authority address his father.

“What is it?” Dionisia asked of Cyriac’s sudden move towards the window. Dionisia went after him and knelt by the window with him.

“A knight, he must be looking for me,” Cyriac said apprehensively.

From down at the street the voice carried up to them, “make sure you tell Cyriac as soon as he returns. The king wants to see him immediately.” The knight bowed to his father and left.

Cyriac stood abruptly and made for the doorway, “I must go down and see what’s so urgent,” he said, not turning to Dionisia.

Dionisia placed the flower near her pillow and ran after him out her room, down the stairs and out into the street where Cyriac stopped in the street.

“What word from the king?” he said commandingly.

The knight stopped a ways down the street and turned back to him. He walked proudly at Cyriac and stopped no closer than a foot away. “Our lord, King Thomas Ansley the third, bid me to tell you, Sir Cyriac, that you are now captain of the King’s Primary Legion. As your first order from the king you are to leave immediately for Colbury where you will receive further instruction.” The knight saluted Cyriac.

Cyriac was shocked, clearly taken aback. He was completely speechless and decided it best to just salute back.

The knight withdrew his salute and Cyriac followed suit. He stepped back from Cyriac and finalized, “the king requests your presence in an hour.” He turned and walked away.

Cyriac just stood there and began to sweat. It was as if he was paralyzed to that spot in the street by the words. Cyriac, a mere knight to the king’s army was now to become a captain of his own legion and sent off to war. Didn’t Gauwyn say he would be safe with Gauwyn’s new appointment as captain of Lanswick’s defense? Cyriac was overwhelmed and unaware that Dionisia was beside him now, her arm wrapped around his and she was clutching it hard as she rested her head against it.

Cyriac’s father walked up to him and stood before him, “son, you must prepare your horse.” Cyriac continued to stand still until finally his father slapped him across the face.

“Father,” Cyriac finally responded, “will you see to my horse? I wish to have a moment with Dionisia.”

“Of course,” was all his father said and left for the stable.

Cyriac took Dionisia’s hand and led her back in her house and up to her room. They sat down on the bed together. Cyriac looked out the window and drew a long breath. He put her hand between both of his.

“I know we’ve only known each other a few days now, but I have developed very strong feelings for you,” he expressed not looking at her, but still through the window.

“If that is so, speak to me, not the window,” she said annoyed. She took her hand away from his. “You don’t have to be so timid with me.”

Cyriac finally looked at her. He took in her beauty but could not find it in himself to let go of everything. He held back and it showed in his eyes that he would not give in. He wanted so badly to, but he was too guarded. So he did all he could; he gave her a kiss that he had hoped conveyed all he had wanted it to. Then he got up to Dionisia’s shock. She looked at him longingly but he did not give in.

“I will write to you,” was all Cyriac said and turned away holding back his tears; holding back because he was running from what he knew to be right in his heart. He began walking out of Dionisia’s room.

Dionisia jumped to her feet. "You will write to me? What are you, some kind of coward?" She cried out. Cyriac was already on his way down the stairs. Mrs. Severin was watching from the kitchen. Dionisia ran to the top of the steps and watched him go down. "I might not be here for you if you should come back."

Without looking back Cyriac replied, "I'm not asking you to be. I will consider you my friend all the same." He walked out the door and closed it behind him. He met his father in front of his smith shop and without exchanging any words, for they knew how each other felt, he embraced his father and gave him a kiss on the cheek. He mounted his horse and rode out of the Westside.

It was when he had already crossed the bridge that Cyriac stopped and looked back. Only there was no going back, he was needed for a service for his king.

Dionisia had gone back to her room and watched Cyriac ride away. She couldn't help but think maybe she had scared him off, but also knew she didn't really want him to leave. He had said he would still consider her a friend in spite of what might happen while he was away. There was some merit to his words; a dose of the character he possessed. Yet he was missing a certain sureness that led her to be less drawn to him.

Though she knew it wasn't the worst thing to ever happen and she wouldn't regret anything for long, she still flopped down on her bed and whimpered. She didn't notice the flower near her head when she reached up to wipe a tear and with the down flow of her hand caught the flower with her arm and sent it to the floor to be forgotten until all beauty drained.

Her mother came up a little later and could only see that Dionisia was on her bed, unaware that she slept. She closed the door and touched her heart, then left.

It was evening when Cyriac left Lanswick leading his legion of three-hundred knights. There was no setting sun to be seen; only an orange and purple clouded horizon that tinted to blood red at the apex of the earth. Cyriac wore a new tunic with a gold king's crest over his chain mail; the mark of his new rank. There was a certainty of war ahead of him, but no certainty of whether he would return alive or buried as a hero as all knights were.

As the red of the last looming presence of any light dissipated from the distance behind him, Cyriac and his legion crested the last hill before their destination. Cyriac stopped his horse and the knights a little confused stopped as well. Deep in the valley before them fires burned and lights could be seen. It was still a few hours ride through the plains and forest. Cyriac swallowed hard and kicked his horse onward. He wasn't riding just to a quick battle, but to a war that would test the very limits of his courage.



It was a few days now since Cyriac had left for war. Dionisia exited the cathedral and looked down the path to where she had first met him. To her surprise Gauwyn was waiting there. She walked down the path to him and allowed herself to smile. The sun was shining brightly and it was mild out. "You are beginning to make this a habit aren't you?" she joked as she neared him.

"I need someone to keep me company now that Cyriac is gone," Gauwyn said half truthfully. He did miss having Cyriac around but Dionisia would be of a far greater value if she allowed him her time. "I was wondering if you might like to come to the palace later in the afternoon for a tour, and perhaps to dine with my father and myself," he said very straightforward and sure of himself.

Dionisia stepped right next to the horse and looked up at him, "that is a very generous offer. What time best suits you, prince?" She curtsied to Gauwyn.

"Three should do nicely," Gauwyn said happily and flashed a big smile.

"As you wish," Dionisia teased and walked away.

Gauwyn watched her back as she left him and couldn't help but believe he was doing the right thing. A prince deserved what he wanted and as a prince he would have, take if necessary, what he wanted.



It was a week since Cyriac left for Colbury. He was sitting on an abandoned wagon in the middle of the village. He wasn't making fast progress with the mission, but for now

the fighting had stopped. Knights patrolled the village in groups of ten, their weapons always at hand. Cyriac was holding a piece of paper on a block of wood and on the wagon next to him was a quill pen and a bottle of ink. Next to the bottle of ink were two letters: one to his parents, one to the king. He dipped the quill in the ink and began to write another:

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*Dear Dionisia,*

*This is the first letter I write to you and hopefully not the last. The battles come in waves and more often than not they are from distances. I have had the knights sweep outwards from the village in waves but we have come up short handed. The Indarialites are smart in their tactics and retreat before we can make any advances.*

*I have thought about you a lot in my time here. You are a driving light in my darkness here. If life should grant me the path to return to Lanswick, it would please me to spend more time with you if you allowed. I left in haste for fear of something far greater than I could handle, and for that I'm sorry. I ask you not to judge me too hastily upon that last moment together. Please, take care of yourself.*

*Sincerely yours,*

*Cyriac*

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Cyriac folded the letter in three and wrote 'Dionisia' on the back. Then he tied it with a piece of string like the other two letters. He jumped up and took the letters with him.

A young man, William, dressed like a peasant came up to him. "Are they ready my lord?" the young man asked Cyriac. He couldn't have been any older than sixteen or seventeen.

“Yes William, they are,” Cyriac said solemnly. “Make sure you deliver the kings first. You remember the way to the other two?” he asked.

“Yes, my lord,” he answered pleased that he did.

“Good.” Cyriac handed the letters to William and William ran off to fetch a horse.



William arrived at the palace the next day. He rode up to the entrance and dismounted as the horse came to a stop. He was half way to the door when Gauwyn opened the doors to meet him. William bowed.

“You may rise,” Gauwyn said assertively. William stood up quickly. “What business have you, peasant?” Gauwyn asked with a sting.

William withdrew the letters from his pocket and took the one for the king from them. Gauwyn noticed on one of the letters: *Dioni*. “You must be Cyriac’s messenger. I will take the liberty of passing his letters on for you.”

William struggled to get his next words forth, “Cyriac asked me to deliver them personally.”

“Don’t be silly,” Gauwyn laughed. “Cyriac and I are best friends. Come, hand them over.” Gauwyn extended his hand to William. William cautiously handed all of the letters to Gauwyn, “very good. From now on bring me Cyriac’s letters and I will see to it they reach their destination. You needn’t be troubled with this duty.”

“Thank you, your highness,” William said and bowed again.

Gauwyn turned and closed the door on William. He looked at the names on the letters: King Thomas Ansley III, Father, and Dionisia. Gauwyn grimaced at the last. He walked passed the kitchen before going to his father, the king, and discarded the letter to Dionisia in the cooking fire.

Late in the evening Gauwyn arrived in Westside at Cyriac’s home. He knocked on the door and Cyriac’s father opened the door and bowed. Gauwyn handed the letter over and

he thanked Gauwyn. Then Gauwyn left, looking up across the street to Dionisia's house and laughed to himself again.



Cyriac wrote many more letters over the course of the months he battled in Colbury. Every week he wrote and every week the letters were burned by Gauwyn at the palace before delivering the status of the war in the east to his father. Dionisia never received a single letter and soon gave up on hearing from Cyriac and soon he was gone from her mind. There was another man for her now and he was as princely as they came. He was sure of himself and confident in himself as any man ever was.

The last of the letters Cyriac wrote was of hate and distaste towards Dionisia, but even that one she would not receive.



It was fall when the war in Colbury had been won. The white flag was finally walked into Colbury by the Indarial captain and a peace agreement was signed by him and Cyriac.

Cyriac rode his horse into Lanswick through the northern farmland. The trees were turning all colors of yellow, orange and red. Many fell as Cyriac rode by and he took pleasure in the color and the breeze that stirred them.

When Cyriac finally made it to the palace he was welcomed back by Gauwyn's false embrace which he made pass off as a normal welcome home one. "Good to see you are well, Cyriac," Gauwyn lied. "My father will be very pleased to see your return. Where are the knights?"

"I left a few in Colbury to clean up. The rest will be back tomorrow," Cyriac answered with a hardened spirit. He was different from when he left. The months of warfare made him a little colder and even less open than he already was.

"Excellent. Come, I will take you to my father. You are to be rewarded, Cyriac," Gauwyn said and again hid his distaste for Cyriac's glory. He was beginning to second

guess his decision. He had wished in the back of his head that Cyriac might meet his bitter end on the field of battle and make things all too easy for him.

Cyriac was taken to King Thomas up on the balcony that overlooked Lanswick. The very spot where the king had given in to his sons wishes to send Cyriac to war. Gauwyn left after Cyriac had bowed to his father.

“You have done this old man a great deed, Sir Cyriac. I have thought long and hard as to a reward since I received your last letter and I have decreed that the lands to the west shall be yours to do as you please,” the king said with pure respect in his heart. “There is nothing there for you yet, but in time, people will settle on the cliffs of Pevalia and watch the sun set on the ocean.” The king looked at Cyriac and noticed him looking at the Westside. “Well, what say you?”

Cyriac turned to the king and met his gaze, “it is a reward that I’m not so sure I deserve, but I thank you, King Thomas. As long as I am to rule the lands to the west, you have my services in your army and those of the people that should settle there.”

“Exactly what I had wanted to hear,” the king said and embraced Cyriac ferociously. Cyriac returned the embrace with equal ferocity and the king gave a hearty laugh when they parted. Then with complete seriousness King Thomas Ansley the third said “you are a good boy, Cyriac. I would consider myself blessed if you were of my blood as well. Go home and see your parents. They have missed you.” Cyriac bowed and left.

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It was a nice fall morning the next day. Cyriac awoke from his bed at home having slept better than any night he could remember. He left the house and got his horse from the stable. When he exited the stable it was to see Dionisia standing there. She was tired, he could tell. She was wearing a basic gown and her hair was a mess. She looked both pleased to see him and yet underlying was a feeling of disgust.

“Welcome home,” she said.

“Thank you,” Cyriac said and began to ride away.

“Wait!” Dionisia cried after him. Cyriac stopped and turned back. “Can we... can we talk?” she asked.

Cyriac rode back and stopped next to her. “Not here,” he said and reached down to Dionisia. She took his hand and he nearly threw her up on the horse behind him and took off at speed through Westside and out into the country.

Trees and shrubs rolled passed as they rode. Fields of long grass blew by as they made their way to the cliffs of Pevalia, Cyriac’s newly acquired land. They rode for over an hour. Cyriac turned the horse gently further north and upwards as the hill climbed further up until finally they reached the peak of the highest ocean side cliff. Cyriac stopped the horse a short distance from the cliff face. Cyriac got off and then helped Dionisia down carefully. Then Cyriac walked away to the edge of the cliff and looked out over the ocean.

The wind blew briskly in from the ocean. Dionisia held her arms close to her chest, chilled by the wind. She stepped onto the cliff edge a few feet from Cyriac. She looked at him and noticed his sword missing. Something had changed. They stayed there a while just looking out at the ocean. Dionisia was beginning to shiver.

“This is going to be my new home. I will build my house on this very cliff top.” Cyriac turned to his field and turned Dionisia with him. “All this you see before you up until the forest that separates us from Lanswick was given to me by the king for what I did in Colbury.” Cyriac awaited some kind of response from Dionisia.

“I thought you were dead. Then I saw you this morning from my window as if you were a ghost. Why didn’t you write to me like you had said?” Dionisia asked in a small voice, the cold clearly coming through in her jittered words.

“Why didn’t I write you?” Cyriac asked broken heartedly. “I wrote you every week and not once did I receive a letter or some word in response. Was I to be discarded to the side for my inadequacies? That is cold,” he said disgusted.

“You are a terrific liar!” Dionisia screamed in his face. “I forgot you existed when I lost any hope of some letter coming from you. Some word from you that maybe you really cared about me and had wished things could have gone differently, but now that is gone.”

“If anyone here is lying it is you,” Cyriac defended. “There is no point in arguing it any further. My messenger returns with the legion today. If you don’t believe me you can ask him yourself.”

“Aren’t messengers meant to deliver messages?” Dionisia continued to argue. Cyriac looked away from her. “You are so quick to look away. What are you trying to hide? Answer...” she didn’t get another word out. As unexpected as anything, Cyriac’s lips were upon hers shutting her up and he wouldn’t let go. Her heart began racing as she realized how much she had missed his touch; his kiss. But there was another now and this could not happen. She forced herself away from him. “I’m sorry, I can’t.”

Cyriac was breathing hard, “what?! Now that I actually force myself upon you, you don’t want it? You are a hard one aren’t you?”

“It’s not that, it’s... I am to marry Gauwyn,” she said and swallowed hard, expecting Cyriac to unleash a vault of anger.

“I half expected he liked you but how is it that you, a peasant, can marry a prince?” he asked in regards to tradition.

“His father has made an allowance for it this time. I’m sorry, Cyriac, but I don’t think I feel about you the way I did before,” she said unsurely. Cyriac looked at her as if to examine her soul. She tried to avoid eye contact. Every second she looked at him she could see what she had desired before and as much as she could she didn’t want to avoid it.

Cyriac’s face was smiling inwardly and she was falling into a spell in the land that was now his. Suddenly she didn’t feel so cold and she leaned towards him. It wasn’t long before they were folded in each others arms in the grass grasping at each other and losing themselves in each other. Cyriac began to take off his coat and shirt and then suddenly was stopped.

“I forgot. Gauwyn is supposed to be coming to see me this afternoon. If I’m not there he will not be happy,” she worried and tried to get up but was pinned down by Cyriac.

“It’ll be alright,” Cyriac whispered in her ear reassuringly. Dionisia was about to speak again only to be interrupted by Cyriac’s kiss and then no more words were spoken

as they intertwined on the cliffs of Pevalia as lovers would after a long absence from one another.



Cyriac and Dionisia got off the horse at the park. Cyriac tied the horse up and walked Dionisia towards their home street and stopped before they could get insight of it.

“You go on without me. We shouldn’t let Gauwyn see us walking together in case he is there. Then he’ll really have questions as to why you weren’t home,” Cyriac said. “I’ll wait at the park for a while and then ride to the palace to meet the legion.” He kissed her and they split their separate ways.

Cyriac was at the palace when the legion returned, and with the legion, William. He walked into the palace garden with William, away from the rest of the legion and palace guards. They stopped in a maze of thick shrubs.

“William, I’m going to ask you something I should have asked long ago but did not think to question until now.” William gave Cyriac a nervous nod. “Did you deliver my letters to Dionisia and if so, did she write me anything in return?” Cyriac asked both seriously and unnerving.

“Neither, my lord,” William answered nervously, “Gauwyn said he would deliver them personally.” The look on Cyriac’s face was frightening to William and he cowered away with his arms in a defensive pose. “Forgive me for disobeying your order, but it was the prince.”

“Thank you, William,” and Cyriac walked back to the palace.

Cyriac was in the common room talking to King Thomas when Gauwyn returned from visiting Dionisia. Neither Cyriac, nor the king got up for him or bowed.

Gauwyn paused in the entrance of the room with a questioning look. There was a very noticeable feeling of regret and anger in the moods they both wore.

“Sit with us, Gauwyn,” the king said. “Let’s be civilized about things as we would like our neighboring kingdoms to be.”

Gauwyn walked in and didn't take his eyes off of Cyriac. He sat across from Cyriac, a table between them and his father positioned as a mediator.

"Things are civilized father. Or have you decided to tell Cyriac what took place that day?" Gauwyn guessed with mock enthusiasm to the two faces fixed upon him.

"I have made peace with Cyriac already Gauwyn. Now you must do so for the wrong you have done him. The very essence that can break a life long friendship can also mend it," the king said with years of wisdom behind him.

Gauwyn thought for a moment and laughed mockingly as if twisted by something deep within the recesses of his conscious. "This can be solved with a simple question, Cyriac: do you love her?"

King Thomas snapped at his son "this is not about the girl!"

"On the contrary father, this has everything to do about her! Do you love her?" Gauwyn announced the four words slowly. "If you can't answer me that, then why should she love you? I love her with my heart, Cyriac, and she has already agreed to marry me. Why would she turn on that?"

Cyriac waited a moment before replying and it made Gauwyn agitated which was the intent. When it looked like Gauwyn was ready to explode Cyriac finally made reply, "You claim to love her, Gauwyn, but in loving her could you let her go if she wanted to be with another? Because if you truly do love her, then you will be able to make that decision if a time came for it."

"She has already made her choice Cyriac. Why should I claim anything?" Gauwyn was getting flustered.

"She made her choice out of a false knowledge of what was going on, Gauwyn. To cheat love is to cheat life and in cheating our friendship you are breaking it. Let her make the choice fairly," Cyriac said calmly.

"He is right, son, you owe him a fair chance at this. If Dionisia is meant to be your princess then she will choose you," King Thomas intervened.

Gauwyn ignored what his father said. "You haven't even seen her since you returned and yet you ask this anyways. That is bold of you, Cyriac, unless there is something you aren't telling me; one bit of information that I am not privy to, but I will

accept your request,” Gauwyn said with some surety. “We can do it here in the garden temple behind the palace tomorrow at noon.”

“I have a better idea, a place private from any eyes or any public where all thoughts can be clear,” Cyriac suggested.

“What do you have in mind?” Gauwyn asked.

King Thomas worried about what Cyriac was going to say, “Cyriac, what are you doing?”

“It’s alright, your highness,” Cyriac said calm as could be; “it is better this way. I’m sure you will agree.” The king didn’t make a notion to his response. “Come to the peak of the highest cliff of Pevalia on the ocean at supper; just you, me and Dionisia and the wind off the water.”

Gauwyn smiled at the idea. “The highest cliffs of Pevalia it is.”

Cyriac stood up and bowed to the king. He looked long and hard at Gauwyn with fire in his eyes and then walked away.

“Oh, Cyriac,” Gauwyn called after him. Cyriac stopped but didn’t turn to him. “Do be prepared. We wouldn’t want any rash actions now.”

Cyriac continued out of the room and then the palace. It was unknown what words were exchanged between father and son after Cyriac left, but it wasn’t a talk that you’d expect from family. It would leave a bitter taste in Gauwyn’s mouth and the king contemplating what the outcome of tomorrow would be. A neutral party was sent by the king to notify Dionisia of what would happen.

That night Dionisia knocked on Cyriac’s home door. The door was answered by his mother and Dionisia was allowed in. She found Cyriac in his room sitting at a small wooden desk writing something. She stepped in quietly, “what are you writing?”

Cyriac didn’t lift his head from the papers. “I’ve been writing a story, actually. It is about me and my life.” Dionisia giggled a bit. “I know, silly of me, but I couldn’t help it with all those hours of not knowing if my life would end. I spent those hours writing letters and this.” He put the quill pen down, the same one from Colbury. Cyriac got up from the desk and came closer to her. “Why have you come? It is late. Everything will be alright after tomorrow.”

“I’m not so sure, Cyriac. You know how Gauwyn is and I don’t think he will settle for second place.” Dionisia wrapped her arms around Cyriac and put her head to his chest.

“I know he won’t,” Cyriac sighed. “If he doesn’t accept the outcome if it goes against him then he will not be made king. King Thomas gave me his word for either my life or his will have ended and the king doesn’t want people to fear their lords.”

“Why don’t we just run away tonight? We can go to the south, away from all of this.” Tears began to seep from Dionisia’s eyes.

“I don’t think running is an option. If we run Gauwyn will hunt us down. He has changed a lot since he and I were young. He used to not care about power or greed.” Cyriac rubbed his fingers through Dionisia’s hair and lowered his head and rested it upon hers gently.

They held each other for a long time that night before lying down upon his bed and once again sharing their love and then fell asleep wrapped in one another.



The sun was beginning to lower itself in the western sky as Cyriac and Dionisia got off of their horses and walked to the cliff where they intertwined the day before. Shortly after Gauwyn could be seen in the distance and he dismounted a short distance away before making his way up the hill.

Cyriac and Gauwyn both had their swords with them. Cyriac’s was on his belt as was normal but Gauwyn had his already drawn and held down at his side.

Dionisia stepped off to the side as Gauwyn approached. The wind was blowing harder than the day before.

“Well here we are,” Gauwyn said bursting with self confidence. He dug his sword into the earth in front of him and rested both hands on it. “Shall we hear the ladies decision then?”

“Now is a good a time as any,” Cyriac said while watching Gauwyn closely.

Dionisia waited. What would be silence was disturbed by the howling of wind as it picked up in tune with the intensity of what would take place. She took a deep breath

and finally announced, "I'm sorry Gauwyn, but I don't love you. I choose Cyriac." She smiled at Cyriac.

Gauwyn grimaced at her words and was clearly hurt by it. He began to breathe deeper. "It looks as if you are prepared Cyriac, but did you come prepared for this?" Then as quick as a lightning flash he withdrew a dagger from the back of his belt with his right hand and it shot forward and stuck in Dionisia's stomach. She cried out in pain and fell to the ground screaming. "You still haven't answered me Cyriac! Do you love her?"

Cyriac's eyes opened wide with anger as he saw her fall. Then his sword was in his hands and slicing down upon Gauwyn who guarded with proficiency at the anticipated attack.

As the sun set swords clashed as Cyriac and Gauwyn danced a fight like none before. Each attacked and countered with ease and flowing motions that would jar and destroy any other man.

Dionisia watched in immense pain as her life flooded out from her wound. Soon the two of them were fighting back towards her. The length of the battle was beginning to hinder them.

Cyriac threw a hard jab at Gauwyn. He knocked the blade aside and made a swing for Cyriac's waste that was dodged and returned with his own hack at Gauwyn's feet. Gauwyn jumped it easily and swung hard with an overhand swing at Cyriac's head. Cyriac raised his sword but was only able to do so with one hand on the hilt and the momentum and force of Gauwyn's swing knocked him to the ground. Gauwyn made another overhand swing at Cyriac's head. Cyriac blocked a piece of it and maneuvered enough to avoid losing his head but Gauwyn's blade caught him in his left shoulder; his main shoulder.

Cyriac stumbled away and regained his footing. His left arm dangled at his side as he struggled to lift his sword with it. He placed it in his right hand and tried desperately to support it with his wounded arm.

Gauwyn was upon him again and Cyriac was able to block a few attacks before finally having his sword knocked away. Then Gauwyn's sword lodged itself deep into his side beneath his rib cage. Cyriac cried out as Gauwyn sliced the sword back towards himself to remove it.

Cyriac collapsed, blood gushing upon the earth.

“If I can’t have her, no one shall,” Gauwyn said as he raised his sword again to finish off Cyriac. Gauwyn lowered it then. Cyriac looked in no position to get up. He was losing lots of blood. Gauwyn laughed and walked away towards the horses below. He was about half way between Cyriac and his horse when he suddenly stopped and fell to his knees.

Lodged in his back right through his heart was Cyriac’s dagger. Cyriac was on his knees slouched over, his skin turning white.

Cyriac then fought his way through all the pain and squirmed to Dionisia. They lay facing each other, their faces a few inches apart, both on the brink of death. Cyriac fought to breath.

Dionisia managed to grab a hold of one of his hands. “I love you, Cyriac,” she said through short breaths of her own.

Cyriac smiled then and even though he was about to die his eyes glowed with love for her, “and I love you, Dionisia.”

They crossed that few inches and kissed for the last time as they died, their lips upon each other, their hands holding each others hands.

The sun set on Pevalia the darkest of reds that day as the three died, but their tale would live on through the words Cyriac wrote and the words that would follow by the king himself.

Thus the story ends on a Pevalian sunset.

**THE END**