

*Tw: death and blood*

*This story takes place in infinity's travelers future roughly 100ish years from the main events*

Sitting at the kitchen table with a cup in hand, Leto stared blankly out the window, watching the occasional bird fly by, but truly she wasn't paying attention. In front of her on the table sat several local papers from the nearby city, the capital of Savgon. The front page displayed bold dreadful words. **“King and Queen of Savgon have passed from illness”**

While Leto felt for the people of Savgon, how they must be in despair at the loss of their monarchs, that wasn't the cause of her melancholic state. Rather her thoughts drifted to the young son they left behind, too young to take the throne, a young boy, a precautionary heir. She wondered how the poor boy was feeling now, so young and all alone, with no one but the staff of the castle and council to watch over him now. Sure it was something, better than being left alone to fend for himself. She knew he would be taken care of physically, but the toll of losing his parents? Would he be loved the same way?

Perhaps she was overthinking everything, things were different in this world... and yet... the pain would leave her be... she was snapped out of her thoughts at the sound of the old front door creaking open, followed by the steps of her husband entering the home and walking to the kitchen, as well as the lighter pitter patter of little feet following behind. He approached her, unaware of her internal struggle as he landed a kiss on cheek as he walked past.

“Good morning my love! How are you this morning? Go out to the city this morning?” He gestured to the newspaper on the table. They didn't deliver this far out, so it was only natural for him to assume so. She nodded before she spoke quietly.

“Yes... the King and Queen have passed...” Her voice was soft, devoid of any emotion as she spoke plainly. After all, how could she feel for people she barely knew? The Farmer stopped pouring his coffee as he turned around.

“What? You can't be serious...” He wasn't accusing her of lying, but rather, was too stunned to believe what she was telling him. “I just visited them month or so ago-”

“Eleven years dear, don't you remember?” Leto placed a hand on her husband's hand. For immortals like them, time would often blur the days together, unfortunately The Farmer was exceptionally bad with his times. “We went to visit them last when their son was born, that was nine years ago...” her voice became nearly inaudible as she mentioned the child. The Farmer paused as if trying to remember the past events.

“Yes... yes it has been- it's really been nine years? Dear me... and that poor boy...” He paused before he turned to look at his wife. She was looking down at the paper. He could tell what she was thinking, and he gave a small sigh as he draped his arm over her shoulder. “You worried about him? Aren't you?” He leaned his head into the crook of her neck. As much as he loved her for her loving and caring nature, he knew it was always her greatest weakness. She didn't say a word, only sat there as she stared out the window. The Farmer stood up straight, placing another kiss on her cheek to get her attention.

“How about I arrange a day to meet with the young prince? I can't promise anything, but I'm sure I can convince the council too-” Before he finished, Leto already grabbed him and pulled him into a tight hug, she didn't say a word, only held him close, and The Farmer held her just tight. “You're welcome...” His words were quiet, but earned him a slightly tighter hug. Once Leto released him, he was off again, the smol bean parade that had followed him in followed him out the door as he left for the castle.

Only one stayed behind, a fuzzy honey bean hopped onto the table, sitting in front of her, looking up at her. It gave a small beep, wanting attention, but clearly concerned for her. She reached out and started to pet the small creature, giving it long strokes along its back. It purred as splotted on the table, however Leto's mind wandered to another place... a distant memory.

*~Almost 200 years prior~*

Leto heard the ear piercing scream as she stood in her kitchen, her head turned quickly, but as her gaze reached the direction it came from, it was abruptly cut off. Her heart started to pound as she turned to her children, her eldest son Odin, her son Stan, and her recent addition to their family, Astril. All three of them looked at her from the couch with big fearful eyes.

“Odin, take your siblings and hide in my room, lock the door and don't let anyone in unless you hear three knocks on the door.” She quickly took off her apron as she made her way towards the front door.

“But mama-”

“No buts!” She cut Odin off, before she quickly felt guilty for raising her voice at her child. She turned back around, leaning down as she held his hands. “I need you to be strong for me and your siblings, my little soldier, please, I promise I'll return, but you must trust me.” Her tone was soft as she gently caressed the side of Odins helm. He paused, his eyes full of confusion and fear, but he nodded. He picked up his youngest sibling Astil in one arm, while taking Stan by the hand and taking them both to her bedroom. She only turned to leave when she heard the soft click of the lock.

She rushed out the door, running in the direction she heard the scream, only to hear the sound of a crying infant. Her run only broke into a sprint as she started to run on all fours, forcing herself to run faster and faster as the sound of the crying only grew louder. She skidded to a halt as she saw a scene that made her heart sink down into the pit of her stomach.

She saw a crook holding a small screaming bundle by the scruff of the swaddle. Its muzzle was covered in blood as it had opened its mouth, closing it as its ear twitched and it turned its head towards Leto. Both only stared, the only sound was that of the screaming child. Leto was the one that spoke first as her lips drew back in a snarl

“Put the child down.” She growled as her hackles rose, her claws digging into the ground. The crook only responded with a growl of their own. Their many eyes focused on Leto as she slowly crept closer.

“Fat chance, It's the parents fault for wandering too close.” It licked its lips of the crimson that stained them. “The humans need to know their place.”

“That is a child!” Leto spat, stomping a hand to the ground. “It has done nothing but exist, that is not a crime!” The crook swung its arm to the side as it spoke, the child nearly flying out of its grip, causing the small bundle to scream more. Leto's heart almost stopped seeing that, and it caused something in her to snap as she lunged forward, tackling the Crook onto the ground and on its back.

As they fell, the child slid onto the ground and rolled away from the two beasts. Leto tried to scramble for the shrieking bundle, but only felt the teeth of the Crook sink into her flank, causing her to howl as he writhed in pain. She twisted her body around, clawing at the Crook's face causing it to let go as blood gushed from its open wound. It let out an ear piercing screech, before it was cut off by Leto quickly clamping her large maw around the smaller Crook's neck.

The Crook thrashed, scratching and clawing at Leto, but she held on tight, ignoring the pain and stinging of the claws ripping her flesh. All she could hear was the sound of the infant, it needed her, she had to be there for it. She bit down harder, not caring about the metallic taste in her mouth as the Crook's thrashing started to slow, and eventually, ceased all together. Leto remained there, holding on long after the Crook had given its last breath, before she finally let go of its neck, as it slumped to the ground.

Her ears were ringing as she took in gulps of air, blood trickled from her mouth as she stood there, her body starting to shake as the pain caught up to her, only as she snapped out of her trance as she heard the cries of the child. She approached slowly, using her hand to gently

orientat the child onto its back so she could get a better look at it. She unswaddled the infant, letting out a relieved sigh as she saw the young girl, while covered in a few cuts, was mostly unharmed... terrified, but safe. She swaddled the infant once more, standing up as she held the small bundle close to her.

“Oh my sweet child... you are okay... you're okay... shhh...” holding the small bundle to her chest, she gently swayed, until the infant's cries became soft whimpers. She gave a small tired smile, only glancing back once, before slowly walking back home. She didn't look back, she just kept moving, holding the infant close as it whimpering faded as it fell asleep. As she approached her home, she saw a faint light in the trees dip away and out of sight, causing Leto to smile.

“Thank you... Lunite” a quiet thank you to an old friend, knowing her old friend had protected her home in her absence. She walked in, slowly making her way to her bedroom door as she knocked three times.

“Odin? Stan? Astril? You can come out now.” Her voice was quiet as the door clicked, and opened slowly, before Odin threw it open as soon as he saw his mother.

“Mama! You're hurt!” He shrieked as he hugged his mother's leg tightly, with Astil and Stan following close behind. She could hear Stan start to snuffle as he looked up, tears and snot dripping down his face as his tiny fists held bundles of her fur protectively.

“Who d-did this?! I'll- I'll hurt them! No one hurts my mama!!” He shouted as his shrill voice cracked with shobs. Leto couldn't help but smile as her children looked up at her, ready to fight for her, she only let out a soft sigh.

“It's okay dear, Mama already taught them a lesson...” Her throat was tightening as the words left her lips. Before she could change the subject, Odin spoke up.

“What's that?” Odin spoke up, pointing at the bundle, causing her to smile as she bent down to give her children a better look.

“This is your new sister, meet... Stephanie.”

*~present day~*

The memory of that day replayed in her mind as she walked up to the palace gate. It wasn't just that day that pledged her, it was all the memories of her precious Stephanie that haunted her. Watching her grow up with her siblings, the move to Sealight, fighting for a life where Skirens

could live with humans in a place where all could feel safe. The memories made her smile... but she soon frowned as the other memories followed.

She remembered how she got older and older. How her sweet little girl, so full of life, started to stay indoors more, how she slowly forgot her mother and siblings. How her body started to fail her, growing weaker and more frail by the day, until it finally... gave up. She was only ninety, a long life for a mortal human like her, a blink of an eye for Leto. The pain ripped at her chest. She had seen her children die before, but seeing them go so slowly, how they decayed over time, watching her die so slowly like that broke her heart, but she still stayed up until the end, holding onto her daughter as she took her final breaths...

The Farmer looked up at his wife and frowned. She had that look on her face again, deep in troubling thought.

“Dear?” His voice snapped Leto back into reality as she looked down at him. “We're here.” His words made Leto look up at the palace gate, she felt his grip on her hand tightened. “If you don't feel up to it-”

“No... I'll be fine... I want to meet him.” Her voice was steady and calm, a contrast to the storm brewing inside. The Farmer nodded, as he opened the gate and they entered the palace.