

Vrakni's Legacy

Looking beyond the stars I couldn't help withering in grief. I don't know what caused it, but I stumbled awake to the smell of ash and something leaving me from within. The warmth I always kept close to remind myself of what my Papa was and the love he showed me.

Even now I cringed at my own stupidity as a child to forget the one person that held me together for so long. I never spoke kindly to him, I never hugged or stood besides him, nor did I give him the breath to speak his thoughts.

Kiara's questions in my dreams had drawn vivid thoughts in front of me and while I didn't speak or answer the curious child just as I never did to anyone else, not even my own wife. But the questions lingered now in this cold almost lonely feeling, who was Papa and why do I never speak of him like I speak of Mama? What place did he hold in my life and most importantly, why not speak ill if the tribe was so bad?

I never cried as hard as I did the day Papa left to do his duty and never returned. The haunted way he looked at mama told me all I needed to know; he wouldn't be returning but he couldn't tell me that. In a way I hated him for leaving me alone but more so for leaving mother to fall apart.

"Mother, c-could you tell me of a time you were at your worst?" my child's face stared up at me from her spot in the grass. She was so grown I barely recognized her as a pre-teen. For a second, I was sure it was just a reflection of me within the lake's shores. Instead of answering, I wondered if Kiara would begin to resent me for keep secrets, but I didn't know how to answer. It was like the words just couldn't form and the taste of ash lingered in my through.

"I want to see my Papa once more my little spirit... can you go to your mother and keep her?" The girl nodded emphatically before struggling to stand whilst leaving in her wake the tracks of a small wolf as it padded its way into the cottage.

"You made me strong; you were always the brightest star in my sky papa... I even named it after you... dragon..." I felt my tongue slip and I squeezed my eyes shut as a felt a hand grasp my shoulder. I wanted to say more, I wanted to turn around, but I couldn't and instead raised my hands to touch the empty space there.

"I am the worst daughter in the world, I should have known, I should have spoken up, I should have done my duty and protected my family.... I should have..."

"Enough..." the voice was low like a slow river over gravel. It was so familiar that I felt my knees grow heavy. "No daughter of mine will speak so lowly of herself... not when she is exactly as I expected of her. For years I struggled to understand, and I think I misunderstood much about you and about what it means to have children."

The voice continued as I fell to my knees in the water, “I am told you are a warrior in your own right, the winter wolf that lives within, and In the passing days as I’ve tried to find my way into the Aethereal Sea I have seen the beautiful children you have bore into this world. Very much like Miltifan, so very much like her. I felt as if I was just a bystander in your life, an obstacle that held you hostage from your freedom... I knew you always loved and adored your mother mor—”

I cut the man off as I stood roughly facing where the voice emanated from the empty space, “And you are wrong!” I seethed at his words. “You were exactly as I needed you! You gave me what I needed to be here to day, you were my brightest star when my sky was black. Without you I would not have crawled my way through the endless aethereal seas I found myself in. Without your teachings I would have never... I would have died with Mother in that river... I wouldn’t have hung onto life so harshly that it left scars so deep that wind howls when it blows across me. You were my father... my lord... you were my role model, and I just had no way to tell you or show you that...”

A silence gathered between the incorporeal being who wandered to their last moments and my brokenness. I could feel as a pair of large arms drew me into a embrace. “Love is never fleeting nor is our memories of those we love...” my papa started the phrase that we shared,

“While our life seems endless the reward is worth the suffering in between the now and then”, I finished as the taste and smell of ash dispersed into the smell of the lake. Like always these moments would live within me to my death, but I felt at ease enough to maybe answer my daughters’ questions now.

“The worst I have ever been was when I let the stars shape how I showed my love, instead of just showing it how I had always know... the worst I have ever been was when I denied my own heart the single most important thing it needed...”

As I wandered back to the cottage, I felt one last fleet touch and a whisper, “Remember to keep Armina safe...”

In short, while I may never truly speak about my papa or if I do it will just be anecdotes. Vrakni was more than just a father, he was the person who shaped me and the winter wolf, he gave me the lessons that have pushed me beyond my limits. I am truly the legacy he left behind, at least a half of it.

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