

**paired with Atis Freivalds "Ethereal Limerence" album*

And I loved her like no one has loved before. But our story feels forever a tragedy.

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There she was, a star, unlike all the others. Radiance spewed off of her, and her grace was unparalleled. I had been curious for quite some time, learning early that she was nothing like the other light that would deign the sky. To say she was soft seemed a lie, for she was just as mighty and perhaps even more treacherous. A light that didn't harm me, whose glow felt like that of a fellow conspirator. Whispering words of future machinations and contrivance.

I thought myself brave, for what kind of divine being would I be if not? I had faced He whose shine could rip through even that of the underbelly. So, what fear did I feel from this one?

"You there," I pause. My entire being had not even left the safety of my cave when her gaze turned to me. There was only one other time I had ever felt like this, trapped. A memory darker than even I, created in infancy. I had awoken, and two towering figures, mightier than anything I would ever hope to know, stared down at me. In a panic, I fled. I fled to this very planet, and I claimed it as mine. And now that feeling had found me once again. Where would I escape to now? What world could shelter me when beings such as these could walk the earth on silent feet?

"Darkness, correct?" My name sprung from her lips, similar to a river trapped between two rocks. It had only one direction, and without issue, it was guided along.

"I am."

"I have wished to speak to you for some time." I froze as her hand found purchase on my shoulder. I prepared for the burning sensation that I knew would accompany it. But no feeling came. There was only warmth. The cold chill departing from my body, not daring to return even when she removed her hand.

“I am Moon. I am disheartened that we have yet to meet even when I have heard so much about you.” My brow rises. I knew not the proper relation between this god and the other. I speculated that they were together, a union as the two of them had come upon this land simultaneously. Many times, I’ve seen them correspond, whooping as they raced across the earth, hand in hand. They did not harm each other, not how the brighter one wound me. If he was brash and conspicuous, then perhaps, she was dubious and guileful.

“Will you walk with me?” she questions, stepping away. Her blue eyes dazzle with a mischievousness that I find myself unsurprised to see resting there. “I do think I have an arrangement that might benefit both of us quite well.” I did not trust her, nor did I care to entertain her and whatever scheme she brought to my ear. But I went with her. Not out of trust or respect. But out of curiosity, for she held something that I was not aware of. She was something that I wished to know more about.

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I hear her calling to me when the wind goes still, and I, as foolish as ever, wish to go to her. From the land of the forgotten, I dare believe I am not. There I sit on my collagen throne, packed with wishes and false hope. Crafted by the hands of those who beg me for a name and crave for remembrance. They sing when the darkness settles in, and when the light shines, their melodic voices churn like the wailing of a boat trapped at sea. Yet when she is above, they grow quiet. The world feels like it’s still. Her sorrowful songs, am I too prideful to think they are for me? Woven by immortal hands by a heart so pure. And then carried out by a voice so beautiful that even the sirens of the sea pause and for once, let themselves be wooed.

How foolish am I to think a creature of taint and chaos has any place in a heart like hers? I am the King of my Derelict Throne, the Maker of the Destitute. I am the name those above scream out when they have been wronged. I am the reason why malfeasance reigns higher than justice and righteousness. I am the Forgotten. I am all that the abyssal claims to be and the affliction every disease is meant to be. The taint is me, and I am the taint.

But when I had her, I was more.

“Now, open your eyes.”

I sigh heavily, “Moon. I know not what game you are playing, but perhaps you should simply tell me what you wish for me to see.”

“Oh, just open your eyes,” she laughs. A sound that will forever bring solace to my world. When Sun watched over the sky, I slept and rested. For as soon as he vanished, was when Moon showed herself. A feeling I dare not name would always take over me. Excitement found me, and I now knew and understood what it meant to be joyous. A creature of chaos, reveling in a schedule of monotony but with far more color. Lands I would never experience rest at my fingertips, creatures that made my imagination grow and soar—all with her guiding my hand.

My eyes open, and I balk at the land. Cherry blossoms sway in the wind, their white and pink petals grasping onto branches as they let their scents be carried by the breeze. Before me sits a large lake, whose surface mirrors the universe and perhaps even beyond that. Millions of stars, each shimmering with enough effulgence to do Moon or even Sun’s job for them.

“Celestiana,” she tells me. “My home. Gifted to me by Cosmos.” She takes my hands in hers. “I know you have yet to call a place yours, and I wish to share it with you. Let this be where your rest your head.” I look from her to her home.

“I fear I would devalue it,” I chuckle.

“Your presence does no such thing. You revitalize,” she declares, cradling my cheek, and I fall into it. Never feeling safer or more at home than when her arms are around me. I dream about her touch, awaiting each day to be in her presence. I have never felt like I belonged, but when I was with her, I knew there was someplace for me to always be. And even when she does release me, I still feel at one.

She grabs my hand and pulls me behind her. We run through the forest of her home, laughing as we awake the few spirits and animals that linger. She shows me all that she

can. Soon, Sun will rise, and Moon will need rest. But another day awaited us. And I awaited it.

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Can the immortal god's love? Do they love like mortals or lesser than so? Do false hearts beat, and does electricity course through unseen veins? We think ourselves greater. We hold the power of the cosmos in our hands and glance down upon ants who thrive to be more. We laugh amongst ourselves as they scurry, crowning kings and condemning criminals. But are they not made in our image?

Did the Kreani not represent Sun? Were they not overly proud? Their pride even allowing their downfall to be swift and precise? Do the Kreol not represent Moon? Their ageless beauty and their crafty ways? Their love and value for the community and each other? What would represent me? This doubt and wonder that I feel? I sought to hold representation as well. But even more than that, I wished to show Moon how much I had cared for her, for there were no words? And perhaps that was my flaw, forgetting the difference between divine and mortal. Or not even that, maybe I had overestimated myself. I had believed that Moon helped me to change, but I was forever the same. I was forever tainted and would forever be simply Darkness.

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“Guilty.”

Of course. Did I hope for more? The charges brought up were justified, my defense, weak if not entirely fictitious. I was guilty. Due to my ineptitude, those who I define as my children now walked the land and, with them, a blight. I had cursed them as much as I had cursed the soil they stand on.

Sun stands, his grandiose behavior and demeanor causing the entire room to feel diminutive. This pleased no one as much as it did him. He had yearned to feel something akin to retaliation since I had cursed his flock. And now, I had only given him the ability to finally claim it.

“You, Darkness, will be imprisoned for millennia to pay for your crimes. And as such a time comes, we will reconvene to see if even that is long enough. Fashioned by your own hand, your prison will rest beneath the soil, amongst the darkness that you so crave to be shrouded in. For you to show your face will be punishable by those even above us. You will be home to all of those who have wronged in their life. Those whose names will be lost to history, whose faces have been marred, and whose actions have corrupted those it was meant to serve.”

The Council stands, and I lie, in shackles wreathed in the energy of creation.

“Do you have anything to say for yourself?” Sun questions. I close my eyes. My attention is drawn to one and one only. My eyes open to see her beautiful face. For beauty as radiant as hers, the color from her skin has lessened. Her alabaster dress now greying with the downcast of her emotions. She was powerless. In a room filled with no one above her and many below her, she was vulnerable.

Words spring to my tongue, all of them clamoring to be heard. But none of them depart. For each time my mouth opens, it closes a second later, and not even a breath escapes me. What would I say? What words would ever be enough to convey my sorrow and truth? Her eyes urged me to rebel, to defend myself against allegations that I could see no argument against. Perhaps all she needed me to say was my intentions, for I have kept those close to my own bosom. But I remain stoic. Silent and remorseless.

“Then you are dismissed.”

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I collapse against the throne built for me. A throne where I will see no subjects and rule over clay and dust. Can a being made out of what I was, feel? Or was it a pathetic attempt to mirror that of those who walk above? Did we create those who would bow their heads purely for our own self-pride? Or was there a greater meaning behind their creation? A yearning that we each feel? Why did I create my children of taint? Was it to reassure myself and match the power that Sun yields so freely? To remind and show the gods that I was one of them. I was even above them. I was unbound to Jiwenia, a spirit of freedom concerning the rest of them. Or was it because I could?

No. Perhaps my hubris was not as impressive as I believe. With heaviness, I wave my hand and stare at the ceiling of my prison. The night sky stared back at me. I cared little for the twinkling of the stars and the racing of crystal dust. My eyes shoot to her, her brilliance as she lit up the sky. I yearn to feel her soothing light. To laugh underneath the twisting skies and make promises like the mortals do. To walk the forest trails and swim the canyon's gorge.

I reach out as if she was there. As if simply willing myself to touch her would mean that the deed could be done. Can a god love? Can they feel and can they grow?

"For you," I choke on my own words, my own intentions. A heart I didn't claim to have, felt to be disintegrating. So, all of those forgotten, was this how they felt? When their time came, did the energy seep out of their body and leave them but a mere husk along the ground? Did they shout for those they loved, or did they accept it? For a monster could wish for nothing more.

"They were a gift for you. My radiance. My love. My light."

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