glowing embers
by divine_chicken

Summary

Ned loses Ashara.
Robert loses Lyanna.

They find comfort in each other's bodies.

The war is won.

The Mad King is dead, and so is Rhaegar, and the rest of the Targaryen offspring - only two remain!

... But that's not all that was lost.

They lose Rickard and Brandon, Ellia, her children, Ashara, Arthur...
Lyanna.

They lose Lyanna.

Eddard - Ned - loses Ashara, and her haunting violet eyes still watch him intently in his dreams. They watch him, and he can't tell if she's mad or enchanted, or something in between. He never could, even when she was alive.

The eyes that watch Robert are those of ice, two jewels colder than the toughest Wildling, the harshest winter.
Yet they hold warmth in them, the same warmth and ferocity burning deep inside a wolf mother's core.

"Why?" They ask, and Robert can't find it in himself to respond. Why, why, why, so many 'why's', so many 'what if's', so many questions -!

Yet Robert has no answer.

In a different world, a different life... Things would be better. But as of now, the war is won.

And it still feels like the most crushing defeat Robert has ever faced.

It's the dead of the night when he enters Ned's tent, a bottle of ale in hand.

Ned doesn't sleep. He is wrapped up in his pelts, looking at the top of the tent. A cloud of rain passes behind his eyes.

He looks at Robert, and profound need bubbles up inside of him - but he tries to suppress it. It's more than romantic or sexual desire. It's the need to be understood, to be comforted, to be held - and it's something he never got the chance to feel. Warriors are made of stone and steel and flame, warriors don't cry.

Warriors don't mourn.

It's what he tells himself, over and over. But when he sees Robert's face, he's just as broken. He feels the same pain, the same burning voidness loss leaves within a man's soul.

Robert sits down next to him, covering his lap with the pelts, imitating Ned. He takes a long swig of ale, and then Ned takes one too, and then Robert, and then Ned, and then Robert again, and then Ned again...

And then, the flask is almost empty. Robert looks at it in disappointment, but as he moves to take another one, Ned grabs him by the wrist.

That's when he knows there's no escape. Not anymore.

He's gotten away before, and so has Ned - times were they flew too close to the sun, shying away only at the last moment before it's too late.

But they don't care about the sun, now. Not anymore. War changes you, for the better or for the worst - or for a little bit of both. Probably a little bit of both.
And Robert finally touches the sun, revelling in the hungry kiss Ned initiates. They cling to each other like a lifeline, hands reaching everywhere they can get, because it's been too long since neither... Felt.

They embrace each other, kissing again and again and again, deeper and deeper, until they're both out of breath.

Ned's fingers card into Robert's thick, black curls, bringing his face close as he smashes their mouths together once again.

They shouldn't be doing this. But neither can bring himself to care. There will come times to mourn, times to remember all the worthy men and women who were lost in the war efforts.

Now is not that time. Now is the time to forget.

It's what Robert reminds himself, over and over as he practically tears at Ned's clothing as he presses him down onto the thick furs. He'd be lying if he said he hadn't been dreaming of this for far too long.

He kisses him with hunger, and Ned whimpers needily as his legs part involuntarily. Robert's body is bigger, it always was - but he loves the way it overpowers him, the way it makes that heat burning deep inside his belly almost unbearably warmer.

Ned almost rips Robert's clothes off, but Robert only moans in response. They're both too far gone to care. It's Ned who begins to rut against Robert's thigh, and he soon feels him do the same.

Robert doesn't want to admit it, but he's always been wanting Ned. It never was the infatuation, the sheer madness that was Lyanna - but it's attraction all the same. It's the profound need to make him writhe and moan underneath his body, to kiss him again and again until they're out of breathe.

They please each other more than once that night, their moans echoing in unison, their bodies moving harmonically, a symphony of sweat and heat.

Ned whines Robert's name when he comes, and the gaze they share reveals something deeper than simple lust - something both are too scared to ever admit. Lust, need - it's all much easier to process.

When they finally crumble under exhaustion, Robert draws the covers over them, Ned's body flush against him. He can barely keep his eye open, Robert notices. Ned gives him one last kiss goodnight, and then he's out cold.

Robert watches his face before he himself passes out.

The last thing he remembers is Ned's head on his chest and Ned's body holding onto him tightly as he returns the innate warmth of the Baratheon blood.

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