An Eve Among Brighter Horizons

by ElGato

Summary

In a brighter future; Diana celebrates Christmas Eve with family and friends.

Notes

I am pretty tardy on this one, and it's not my greatest attempt, but this ended up almost 30 pages long. I had initially meant for this to be up on New Years. But I did reach my goal to get this out before Wonder Woman 752, where I suspect we won't be seeing our Mr. Trevor for a long while (I hope I'm wrong, but I'm tempering expectations there).

Because this is essentially set in an alternate universe to the comics (and in my series Complicated Lives in some capacity) so it does reference canon events but offers a brighter future and Lyta Trevor, aka the original better Fury, was allowed to exist.

“You are so good at that,” Diana’s voice was so soft, loving and calm as she stared at the small figure in the bed before her. Steve rose to his feet and brushed back the curls of his little daughter, who had just succumbed to her father’s gentle lullaby, a trick he used on his nieces, nephews, godchildren and many other of his friends’ kids to get them to calm down.

Steve turned with a sigh, not realizing how tiring it could be to get such a tiny person to sit still for only a moment.
But children were scarily strong and stubborn, and their daughter, Lyta, after Diana’s mother Hippolyta, was no exception, adding onto a curious energy that sometimes would even trip up her Amazonian mother.

After years of being together off and on, they never really talked much about children, and when the news came out, both wished they could say they were excited. But both Diana and Steve were anything but.

Diana’s priorities just didn’t involve children being at the forefront of her mind. And given her roles on multiple fronts; Princess on Themyscira, superhero on Earth, ambassador for anything in between, there was a fear that whatever child she brought into the world would be extra vulnerable to malicious attacks.

And Steve was a soldier. And as a result he saw a lot of terrible things. And after years and years of that, when he retired from active duty and had more time to himself, the physical and mental toll quickly caught up to him and he could become quite moody at times when all he could think about were dead kids. Dead babies. Dead innocents. He anticipated adding a kid to the mix of all of what was swirling in his head wasn’t the best of ideas.

He hated seeing kids hurt, even indirectly. Steve had a hard enough time believing he could protect anyone when his significant other was an Amazon. Diana was not pleased to see his face go ashen white, almost deadly pale when she told him. She wasn’t sure about having a child either, but she really didn’t need to see Steve look so frightened and devastated at that moment in time.

Thankfully afterwards, Diana’s pregnancy was an easy enough distraction for him that the both of them were hopeful that he could leave his demons again, but after Lyta was born, the eager excitement he had when Diana was expecting transformed into...something else.

Nothing too bad, thankfully so far, but he was...quieter. Prone to getting absorbed in dark thoughts and depression even as he was trying to take care of his baby daughter while Diana was away. The memories of his time at war and battling mythical monsters in the past had resurfaced when Lyta was around six months old, when he would get flashbacks of dead children just seeing her face. The past three years was a chore for him emotionally and mentally and Diana did her best to be supportive and take up the slack when she was around so Steve could get some air.

As turbulent his moodiness was, the daily battle was absolutely worth it for Lyta. His pride and joy. The love of his life.

As with any double-edged sword, there was a good side and a bad side, the upside to the revisiting of his memories was that Lyta, having inherited her mother’s sensitivity towards people’s emotions, could detect when Steve was upset at a very very young age. When she could crawl, she would give a loud coo and try to crawl into his lap trying to get his attention, a welcome distraction from his volatile thoughts. And having Lyta in his arms, the loving warmth always relaxed him.

Already at three, Lyta was a polyglot, having learned just as much Greco-Amazonian from Diana as English, something that impressed Steve to no end. He wasn’t much for languages, except maybe broken Irish, he learned a few key phrases here and there on many languages but he never had the drive to cement them to memory. But Steve started to learn Greco-Amazonian thanks to Lyta’s influence. Easy simple words he could start to commit to memory and already Steve had a favorite word by far.
Bampas.

The Greek equivalent of *daddy, or papa*. Steve thought the word appropriately exuded a soft strength that he tried to provide for his family. Often uttered brokenly, excitedly, in a high pitched squeal of delight, lisping the ‘s’ at the end. *Bampas* was Lyta’s name for her father.

Though Lyta’s first word was *Mama*, the name for mother was universal between Greek, English and Greco-Amazonian, as she began to learn more about speech there was a distinguished effort from her to try to say the right word for her father.

It was first *Bah*. Then it was *Bampah*. Now it wasn’t quite there. Her tongue still working around growing teeth so it was more *Bampasss*.

Still it never failed to cause the corner of his mouth to curl up in warm delight and he would often turn find his daughter then toddle her way towards him.

Thankfully, for the three Christmases Lyta has seen, Diana hasn’t missed one of them so far. The three of them developed a small, lovely tradition. They would wake up, go to church in the morning and meet Tracy’s family there. After the service was over they would return home, Tracy following them, eat some appetizers, and mingle, maybe watch some basketball if an interesting match was on, then do some outdoor activity, hiking, snowmobiling, sledding, building a snowman, for about an hour until people got too cold.

Then, testing the kids’ patience when it comes to presents, they would watch *A Christmas Carol*. Any version that they felt at the time, while Steve went about making his mother’s Irish stew. Everyone would eat after the movie was over. Then, when the sun was about the sink towards the horizon and the sky began to darken they would all open gifts by the tree.

And then, when the night completely fell, they would all return outside for a large bonfire, for Diana in memory of her traditions on her home island. These were lovely traditions that Steve, especially had a strong desire to keep.

But already the tradition was to be broken.

Diana had invited Bruce and Clark and their families over for the holidays. They were to arrive on Christmas Eve and stay through Christmas Day and possibly the day after, that was still up to debate with the respective families.

Steve did not like it one bit. Nothing against Batman or Superman, but he rather have this time just with his family. They took up much of Diana’s time elsewhere, it only seems fair that they let her have the holidays with just her family.

But he relented, knowing in the back of his mind that it was only fair that since Tracy had become a regular part of their holidays, that she should be able to include some of her friends as well. But his moodiness took a rather persistent swing downward to where seemed to always be busy doing and griping about something when preparing the house for their guests.
The first to arrive was Tracy and her children, Allison and Ian. Normally she would come by Christmas Day after meeting Steve, Diana and Lyta at church, but Steve had told her that since people were already coming by on Christmas Eve, that she might as well too.

Tracy’s animosity towards Diana was put aside long ago. She felt that, at this point, especially when Diana still stuck around when Steve was at a very scary tipping point post-A.R.G.U.S, that she was wrong about Diana’s commitment. And all other reservations were shoved aside for Lyta. Her first and only niece. Her goddaughter. She was sure she was the most excited of them all when the news that Diana was expecting came (after acknowledging these weren’t the best circumstances for both Diana and Steve). And after Lyta was born, she was certain she spent half her time helping Steve and Diana with her. Tracy’s oldest being in college and her youngest, her daughter, being a self-sufficient senior in high-school, Tracy had a lot of time on her hands to lend to whatever needs her brother’s new family may have had. And having gone through having kids twice before, Tracy proved to be an incredible bank of knowledge for the anxious couple.

“Where’s the little one?” Tracy asked, looking around for Lyta, expecting the toddling, bouncing ray of light to be tearing up the place in excitement.

“She’s down for a nap before everyone starts getting here,” Diana answered with a pleasantly exhaustive sigh. Lyta probably didn’t agree too much about the nap. Tracy gave a coo of disappointment, wanting to see her niece.

“A darn shame, and no tree too?” Tracy whirled around to her brother. “You aren’t being a Scrooge again this year are you?”

Steve’s brows rose, “Since when am I a Scrooge?”

“You’re a bit of a curmudgeon, but I would not call you a Scrooge,” Diana replied.

“Thank you.”

“You’re more of a Heathcliff of late,” Diana bit back behind a wry smile, not paying any mind to the glare he gave.

“Look I’m kinda all discombobulated about this thing anyways,” Steve sighed placing his hands on his hips, the weariness over the whole celebration already visibly seeping into his body. “I’m going out soon to get it. Maybe I’ll break out the Corvette.”

The 1958 Corvette convertible was an old vintage car Steve bought from one of the locals around his birthplace shortly after entering the Marine Corps. It was to be something he tinkered around with until...other life things pulled his attention completely away. Typical life things like crash landing on an island full of women and taking their Princess back with him.

Diana at first didn’t mind that Steve had an old barely used car sitting in their garage. Until he bought another rusting barely used vehicle and another and another. Soon, their back lot looked like a junkyard car dealership full of cars, trucks and pieces of anything in between.

To Steve’s credit, he did fix up a few for some friends, and he did earn quite a bit of cash from Simon Baz for some parts the Lantern bought to soup up his own racing car, but it wasn’t nearly enough to warrant how much rusted metal Diana had in her yard.
“You still have that old thing?” Tracy said, aghast.

Steve shrugged. “Yeah, in the garage. Still runs.”

“It doesn’t have a top,” Diana reminded him curtly.

“So? I’ll wear a hat and mittens. I’ll even put my snowmobiling suit on if it will make you feel better.”

“It’s not me going to get frostbite out there. And are you so sure anyone has a Christmas tree this late?”

Steve ignored the question and announced as he was busy in the closet shuffling for his gloves, “I’ve got one more spot with me, if anyone wants to come. Ally?”

The seventeen year old girl jumped, not expecting her uncle to single her out for an open air trip in the middle of winter.

“You can give yourself pneumonia all you want, Steve, but I want my daughter to live to see college.”

“I’ve still got her snowmobiling suit in storage too.” Steve scoffed at this sister and laid a heavy hand on his niece’s shoulder, “What do you say kiddo? You used to ride with me to see the lights back in the day.”

There was a confused familiarity in Allison’s eyes, as if she didn’t recall the memory, but had a gut feeling that it happened. It was probably at an age where she was still developing a concrete long-term memory.

Allison agreed softly, getting a bit of a thrill at her mother’s annoyed face.

As Steve and Allison went into the cellar to find the snowmobiling suits in storage, Tracy and Diana heard a soft voice come from a room down the hall that led to the bedrooms. Lyta was up from her nap.

“Ian, Tracy, make help yourselves to something to drink in the kitchen while I go get her.”

Diana didn’t have to be so gracious a host. Tracy remembered a time she spent nights here helping Diana with Lyta when the child was just a few days old. Steve was given the rare opportunity to travel to San Francisco for some training to would make him more valuable as a government contractor. And therefore, more finances to support his newborn baby girl. He didn’t want to leave so soon after his daughter’s birth and subsequent arrival in the States, but it was an opportunity he felt he had to take.

Despite being good with children in general, Diana was oddly easily overwhelmed as a new mother herself. She relied much on Steve to know the various nuances of babies to ease her mind, something that, given their respective genders, Steve teased her about at first, until it became apparent that Diana was truly upset that she didn’t know how to mother her infant like she should. And with him gone and her own mother, the closest woman to her she could go to for advice was miles away, Tracy’s volunteership and aid was something Diana grew to value. And it brought the two women closer together.

Lyta was still drowsy as she toddled her way down the hallway slowly at her mother’s knee,
wearing a little red shirt with a reindeer on it and white tights, her golden curls playfully disheveled. Diana ran a hand over them in a futile attempt to get them straight. It was useless. Having her father’s fine texture and color, with her mother’s waviness made Lyta’s hair a perpetual glowing nimbus on her head.

“Look who’s here. Say ‘hi’ to Theia Tracy.”

“Hi,” Lyta’s high voice uttered abruptly.

“Hi, Lyta!” Tracy beamed, bending down to meet her height.

“Hi”, the girl repeated, but the girl’s thoughts were clearly elsewhere than her aunt at the moment.

At that moment, Steve and Allison returned from the basement.

“Bampas?” Lyta pointed to Steve as he came into her view all decked out in his snowmobiling suit. She was staring at him, finding him to be a strange creature in all that clothing until he lifted his head and gave her a goofy smile. Her face brightened in recognition.

“He is funny looking, isn’t he Lyta?”

“Well, we’re off. Ian!” He pointed to Ian who was leaning on the island counter over the plate of cheese and sausage slices, “You’re the man of the house now. Don’t let these ladies drive you too crazy.”

Ian grinned at Steve’s cheek and how much it visibly annoyed both Tracy and Diana. Steve hid a smile back and followed Allison outside.

While Steve was gone, Diana did her best to follow some small instructions on the recipes he was making for dinner tonight, but Tracy and Ian seemed content on staying with her, chatting to pass the time while she did her best to navigate the kitchen. Ian and Tracy helped her out once or twice in understanding what the recipes were asking or finding where Steve put things in the kitchen. She could take down intergalactic threats and monsters but sometimes trying to maneuver around her home proved to be a greater challenge.

Tracy was trying to hold a squirmy Lyta in her lap as Diana laid out some of the more healthy choices for the child to snack on until her Bampas returned. Lyta thankfully didn’t seem so fussy over grapes, but a plate of butter crackers caught her eye and she thrust her little hand out in their direction, a tiny finger pointing and her whine one of want.

“Finish your grapes and then you can have a cracker,” Diana told Lyta, a bit distracted by putting more snacks out and following Steve’s written instructions for the mashed potatoes. Tracy hid a smile when Lyta gave a small whine and shifted in her seat, and reached for another grape in front of her. Tracy plucked one of the other grapes and popped it into her mouth, Lyta now that much closer to being able to eat her cracker.

Although Tracy thought herself strict with her own kids, she couldn’t help but spoil Lyta.

A lot of people couldn’t help but spoil Lyta. A big part of it was because she was Diana’s daughter. Many people loved Diana, so it stood to reason that would extend to any children she may have (no matter how much of a dullard some thought the father to be). But Lyta would smile at you,
toothless and happy, giggling, smiling, like a ray of sunshine beaming from her blond curls, her wide beautiful blue eyes narrowing as she laughed, and then everything just seemed so perfect.

When it comes to spoiling the girl, Bruce Wayne was the biggest culprit. He was Lyta’s godfather and he took that title and ran with it. How could he not shower the child with every want when the gloominess of the Batcave now rang bright with her laughter as she and Bruce’s seven-year-old daughter, Helena, played. When Diana brought her over to Wayne Manor, Lyta was treated more like a princess than in her own royal household.

So it was no surprise that when the Waynes arrived, Bruce, Selena, and Helena, that they were hauling several large gifts to be placed by the tree for Lyta to open. “I guess I should expect you not to listen to me when I tell you to go a bit easy this year,” Diana commented dryly, eyeing the many packages that were no doubt for Lyta.

“Well, they’re here and I dare you to make me return them,” Bruce’s baritone rang in the entryway as he kicked the snow off his shoes, the richness of his voice much softer now ever since Helena was born.

“Boooce!?”

“Yes” Diana laughed, turning to see Lyta hovering around the entrance to the kitchen to see who was at the door. “Unka Booce is here.”

“There’s the Little Princess,” Bruce Wayne said in the most gregarious way Bruce Wayne was capable of, gently pulling Helena’s winter coat off her shoulders to place with the rest of the guests’ coats in the closet at the entryway.

Bruce bent down, even in his fine three piece suit, and poked the girl gently in her chest. “I hope you were a good girl this year,” Bruce patted a wrapped box for effect. “I wouldn’t want Santa to take these back.”

Lyta’s eyes went wide for a moment, before Bruce shook his head, “I think I can take in a word with Santa even if you weren’t.” He then brushed back her curls, not unlike the way her mother did.

The girl laughed quietly for a little child and turned coyly before running to her mother. Lyta wasn’t exactly a shy girl, but sometimes it took her awhile to get warmed up to even familiar company. But Bruce Wayne had a way of charming her and Helena, and Lyta scurried away in gushing embarrassment rather than uncertainty.

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“Suck up,” Selena snickered at her husband. Bruce still had no clue how to be happy. Now that he was he tended to have phases where he could go overboard with happiness, even subtly. He turned to Diana with a wry smile on her lips, “We promised not to spoil Helena and he’s already broken that promise hundred fold!”

“I’m not spoiled!” Helena protested. She hated being called that, namely by Damian who was understandably jealous of Bruce’s affectionate relationship with his daughter. Helena didn’t want to be spoiled, but her parents weren’t exactly helpful there.

“Where’s Steve?” Bruce asked lowly as if the man were a dirty secret. And it was a tone that Diana didn’t appreciate all that much. Bruce didn’t dislike Steve. In fact he liked him as much as Batman could like a former government agent. But it wasn’t a secret that after Leviathan’s reign and the destruction of A.R.G.U.S Steve had a tendency to make himself absent from gatherings if he was feeling agitated.
It was strange, Bruce mused, that as he was warming up to the idea of being around people more and accepting happiness, Steve now struggled with it. Still, Bruce had to admit that Steve handled his moodiness in a mature way.

“He’s just out getting a last minute Christmas tree.”

“More like last second,” Tracy quipped before extending a hand to Bruce, “Tracy, Steve’s sister, nice to meet you.”

About a half a mile away, the Kents were driving down the wooded winding road toward Diana’s home. It had been a long drive from Metropolis, Lois saying more than once ‘Screw it, let’s fly’ when they hit Christmas Eve traffic.

As they were about to hit an intersection, they saw two figures in a convertible with the top down, a fir tree hanging out the back. The figures were dressed very warmly, on account of no top and the cold December air whipping their faces.

“Holy shit, I think that’s Steve,” Lois uttered softly, despite the expletive. They stopped at the intersection, watching the car turn down the road that led to Diana’s house. It was Steve alright.

“In a convertible. With a tree hanging out in the back.” Clark pointed out, smiling through his laughter. He was from a rural community. Seeing crazy stuff like Christmas trees hanging out the back of rusted vintage cars was common where he grew up. But still, this was a nice Virginia area, not a farm community. No doubt Diana’s unconventional household created somewhat of a presence in the otherwise picturesque wooded suburbs that held the families of high end political officials.

They followed the absurd scene down the quiet roads to where Steve and Diana’s house was hidden among the winter trees of the Chesapeake Bay. The convertible turned down their gated roadway, the gates open during the day and closed when everyone was in bed for security, and Clark followed.

Visible in the convertible, after parking the car and shutting the engine off, Steve directed them to park in the empty spot next to him, behind the brand new Bentley Bruce got Selena this year.

After parking, Clark stepped out of his SUV watching as both Steve and Steve’s niece had to hop over the open side doors of the convertible, the handles long broken and rusted to uselessness.

“That thing purr like a kitten?”

Steve chuckled, “One that smokes a pack a day maybe. I haven’t found a good muffler for it.”

It didn’t look like he would find one, or at the very least it wouldn’t begin to fix all the issues the old convertible clearly had just by looking at it. Still Clark couldn’t help but admire it, reminding it of his father’s old car that was eventually sold for scrap.

“Boy! Steve, what year is this thing?” Clark bent down to look at some of the detailing. He wasn’t much of a car expert, but there was something to what old cars did to look marketable back in the day that fascinated him.

“Good ol’ 1958. Works like a charm.”

A scoff from Allison told otherwise and Steve was, in fact, bullshitting Clark. Granted it was the best running of all the junk vehicles he’s bought.
By then, Diana was at the front door, breath breaking in the cold air, the heat from the home at her back. “I see you found the fool on the fool’s errand!”

“Not so foolish,” Steve pointed the tree. “We got a tree.”

“And how much was it?” Diana asked with a knowing smirk on her face.

“Not important,” Steve interrupted immediately, even as Allison opened her mouth to definitely give the answer that was probably a grotesque amount for a Christmas tree.

Diana stepped outside to embrace Lois and Clark, “I’m so glad you could come.”

“Looks like we’re the last ones,” Lois said, eyeing the Wayne’s car, rolling her eyes at the gross extravagance of it.

“You had the longest to drive. Please come on in and take a load off.”

As with any reunion involving the fabled Trinity, there was a lot of exchanges of hugs. Members would hug spouses and spouses would hug spouses and members would hug members. Diana quickly apologized, feeling that everything was just a bit haphazard with Steve still outside with his niece and nephew trying to get the tree inside the house.

“Hello!” Steve’s voice boomed, greeting the Waynes, a bit breathless as he, Ian and Allison carried the new tree into the spot in the living room, Selena pulling Helena back near the hallway to allow the family to come through. The youngest Wayne child, still young enough to enjoy everything related to the Christmas season, stared on in quiet excitement.

Clark bent down to hug the former Catwoman and rub Helena’s head. Clark was Helena’s godfather, something that amused everyone but Bruce Wayne, even though it was his idea.

He didn’t realize Clark would use it as a reason to drop by the manor at any given moment.

While the chaos of catching up occurred in the kitchen, the living area wasn’t much better as Steve brought up tools to trim the trunk and branches of the tree. The sudden noise of the saw blade cutting through the trunk easily got Lyta’s attention and she left Selena’s lap to wander into the living room to investigate.

“Stand back, little one,” Diana warned gently as she used long strides to chase after her, noting that Steve was holding the sawblade extremely still, not wanting to risk harming Lyta even if she was clearly not in harm’s way. “Bampas is holding something sharp.” Lyta took her mother’s hand, babbling something unintelligible, and Steve moved on to sawing off limbs to even out the sides.

When Steve unceremoniously finished trimming the tree, he tossed the last twig aside, mind away from Diana and Lyta until Diana spoke.

“See? And Bampas still has all his fingers!” Diana assured and Steve held out his hands for his daughter to see him wiggling all ten digits for effect.

It wasn’t even evening and Steve was already breathless. He still had to finish cooking for the
guests and that would take up the rest of the afternoon. There was a quiet concern among that he was overworking himself to impress them. The Kents were polite company and asked if they could help with anything. Steve politely refused. Tracy was a bit more forceful, a good cook herself, but Steve was very territorial over his kitchen. He relented and allowed her brown the stew meat.

Diana knew better than to bother Steve when he was in a manic cooking episode. He had a tendency to bounce from here to there all over the kitchen, grabbing utensils and spices and oils that anyone who tried to ‘help’ him would only get in his way.

She smiled as she watched him cook, admiring the intensity he had when he was cooking a nice big meal for special occasions. This was her home and she allowed him reign of the kitchen. It would get far better use under his control. When it was just him and Lyta, he still cooked meals, for Diana in case she returned home, for himself to remain healthy and to introduce Lyta to better food choices besides the chicken nuggets and hot dogs children her age were so drawn towards. If Diana was around, she often held Lyta back away from Steve was he cooked, not wanting her to get his way. But Steve learned to slow down when it just him and her. And cooking then became something that relaxed him. He would sit her on the counter and let her watch him, while he kept tabs on her.

Already some of his fondest memories was just hanging out in the kitchen with Lyta.

But this wasn’t just for him and Lyta. This wasn’t even just for Tracy’s family. He had other tastes to indulge, and a lot more mouths to feed. He could cook under pressure, but he took on the air of a really strict chef.

The guests were getting antsy, snacking but trying to hold off until dinner, the smells from Steve’s cooking made everyone peckish. He barked a soft direction to Ian to get the places ready on the table as the stew was simmering and it would be only a matter of moments before dinner would be ready.

It was then, when all the cleaning, cooking, scrambling to get a tree and entertaining guests came at a still, when he could finally settle down and sit at the meal he and Diana helped prepare, when he could stare at the table of people watching as they took turns trying to entertain Lyta the most, that he felt at ease. At a calm he welcomed every time he would look across the table into Diana’s eyes.

Though it has been three years since they had Lyta together and Lyta carried Steve’s last name at Diana’s request for legal, citizenship, safety and bonding reasons, the topic of marriage was never really brought up. Steve had mentioned throughout their relationship that what they had was arguably a lot stronger and a lot more complicated than a marriage, but he never popped the question.

And Diana didn’t seem to want to be married in the mortal sense anyhow. It would be complicated to navigate given her status as a Princess over in Themyscira. But she wasn’t so sure she would say ‘no’ if Steve asked. But Steve seemed to appreciate her independence enough to not ask at the moment.

But for the rest of the world, marriage, conventional or otherwise, for the two would always be on the table, Lyta bringing the couple closer together than ever before, especially when things were rocky. And normally Steve would cynical towards couples who had children to patch broken
relationships, but having Lyta allowed them both to focus on what was important, and for Steve especially he found his newfound worth in raising her.

After Lyta was born, Diana began to fall harder for Steve, something she allowed herself to do freely and happily, even if he wasn’t the exact same man she once knew. He was better in many ways, though he would absolutely disagree. But now he was more honest and vulnerable when he was having bad days and he was more willing to accept help about his emotional health. Before he would hide behind a charming quip or two, or calm reassurances. He felt his behavior now made him more unpredictable and needy, and Diana thought the opposite.

After dinner, Lois, Tracy and Diana allowed Steve to properly take a load off after doing most of the cooking and helped wash dishes and clean up. He and the other men, including his nephew retreated to the living area by the warm light of the tree and fireplace, fresh whiskies in hand.

Poor Clark. He feared he had to carry much of the conversation. It wasn’t as if he didn’t find Bruce or Steve, or even Steve’s nephew good company. Bruce was never much of a talker, and Steve wasn’t much better and he presently looked very very tired, sinking back in his armchair with his whiskey in hand dangling over the armrest. Ian, Steve’s nephew, wasn’t an extroverted young man by any means, but he could contribute to a conversation if he found the topic interesting.

Thankfully Selena, Helena and Lyta were a welcome distraction as they watched Helena show Lyta a new doll she got as an early present from Dick Grayson. Lyta had a mild interest in the toy and Helena let the younger child carry the doll for a bit.

Helena, the youngest in a large household felt that she could be a big sister to Lyta. There was a hope that the two would still remain friends as they grew. But Helena didn’t know that her time with her ‘little sister’ was limited. It would not be long before Lyta would disappear to her motherland and Bruce dreaded the day when that would occur. And how he would tell Helena.

It was another reason why he did not mind Diana and Lyta spending as much time at Wayne Manor as they desired, disrupting his precious routine.

They waited until the rest of the ladies returned to the living room with their wine glasses and cordials before Steve began opening boxes of ornaments letting people, family and guests, alike have a free for all on the decorating.

He had set aside one box of special ornaments, ornaments he reserved for his small family to hang up. There was a small red ornament he and Diana got in Boston for their first Christmas they spent together. There was a rocking horse ornament Etta Candy got Lyta after she was born. There was a chain of all of the dog tags Steve wore in his military career that was used as a makeshift ornament. It also contained the dog tags of Nick, Bo, and Taki, the three soldiers who died when their plane crashed on Themyscira.

Though Steve only put up the one ornament, and was noticeably, patiently quiet while the others carried on. Still, he mused, the tree was looking nice, a hasty, expensive decision all last minute dressed to the nines to look magical in the subtle light the home had against the darkness outside. It was funny how an everyday natural object could look so ethereal when given a finer touch.

He noticed quietly that Diana was a lot more lively. More lovely, being a gracious host to her friends. She not often had opportunities to play host, and it was apparent that it was something that
Though Steve recently could rival Bruce Wayne in terms of isolation, he admitted that having his precious private time with Diana and Lyta for the holidays sacrificed for her to enjoy the festivities with more people she loved was well worth it.

He was thankful she stayed with him. But he decided to make things clear for Diana: he would never be at the point where he felt one hundred percent deserving of all the gifts Diana gave him. His life, her love, and now, a child that he adored and who adored him in return. It was too much for a man not to feel like he cheated somewhere.

Previously, Diana was attracted to his overwhelming confidence, but as the years wore on it was revealed that his confidence was a ruse. A ruse to hide guilt. Over a lot of things over the years. Guilt that piled on until he had to admit to himself and to Diana, for the sake of their very friendship that it bothered him. And nothing could or would ever stop him from feeling that way, no matter how hard he tried. Her power didn’t bother him. Nor did her dominance. She was entitled to be whatever and be with whomever she desired with those traits. No, he was self aware that the only thing that made him feel this way was himself.

And in a twist that only piled on the feeling of unworthiness, Diana accepted his feelings and stayed with him. She helped him and didn’t take advantage of him. She let him have his emotions. She let him have his negative moods, as abundant as they tended to be. And she let him murmur through tears in their bedroom how he felt she and Lyta should leave him and be with someone less tired, less willing to succumb to years of emotional repression and bearing witness to humanity at its worst. She didn’t patronize him, nor did she leave him, even in jest out of frustration to teach him a lesson. She just let him express that, yes, this was what he was feeling at that moment, and all she could do was remind him of her feelings towards him by being there the next day, even if it’s just a message when she was on a mission.

Diana simply allowed actions do the talking, and she gave an open ear, even in the distracting whirlwind of their lives.

He kept an eye on Lyta. It was late for her and sometimes, as with most toddlers, being tired left her a chore to deal with. But when Lyta noticed her father’s gaze fall to her, she babbled something in soft delight and pointed at him. She cautiously brought herself to her feet before she toddled to him.

“What, Lyta?” Steve asked, noticing the girl grabbing on the leg that was crossed over his knee, reaching on her tiptoes. Steve dropped his leg and leaned forward in his chair and Lyta gave a soft “Bampkas” before climbing into his lap.

Lyta would try to crawl into her father’s lap whenever she was tired, wanting him to hold her as she fell asleep among company. Steve loved it. It kept him grounded, all focus on his little girl. Still, he would sometimes wonder how many more opportunities like this will he have, before she was too big for him.

He sighed softly into Lyta’s curls at the thought, before banishing it away as he became focused on the weight of her in his arms, nothing calming him more even with eyes staring at them.

“I’m guessing she’s a daddy’s girl,” Lois commented at the scene and Diana nodded beaming. “Very much so.”
It was the envy of the universe, to have the heart of both Princesses of Themyscira, something Steve mentally noted to try not to take for granted, because lately he never felt more loved, and he didn’t want that feeling to go away.

Steve leaned his head back a bit to check if Lyta was asleep. She was lights out. Everyone noticed that the bustling tension Steve had to make it through the hectic day fell away as he sank with his daughter into the armchair, the corner of his lips under his beard curling softly.

The others chattered and he was silent, wanting to be everything for Lyta’s sleep, soft, quiet, calm, and all his focus, the noise of the families happily chatting among themselves far away from his thoughts, was on this moment. This person.

It was then that he noticed Diana standing over him, her face softly shadowed as her eyes shone down at him with heart breaking tenderness. She brushed his shoulder and whispered so no one else could hear, “If you want to go to bed you can, we’ll be fine. You did a lot today, Steve.”

The child on his chest rose slowly with his deep breath. “I’ll stay a little longer to be sure she’s asleep.”

“Okay,” Diana whispered back, biting her lip as she held back to urge to kiss him on the cheek, but they were in public and it could disturb Lyta. And for Steve, not even a kiss from an Amazon Princess was worth disturbing Lyta’s peace.

Eventually he snuck off with her still asleep in his arms to lay her in her bed. She started to shift and whine in her sleep and Steve hushed her gently, rubbing her back to keep her asleep.

“Shhh, my love,” he said gently, the rumble of his voice soothing Lyta back into a deep sleep. The happy voices of everyone else was muffled, distant, everything felt pleasantly quiet. He softly sat on his daughter’s bed, keeping her to his chest and close to him and reclined back as much as he could given the small size of the bed.

Exhaustion finally took him then, and he fell asleep with Lyta in his arms.

Christmas morning was an early start. Diana being one of the first to rise as the Kents and Waynes laid around in their guest beds in the loft. Steve didn’t rise until later when Lyta started fussing.

To Lyta’s credit, when she awoke in her father’s arms she remained still, allowing him to rest a little longer. But a child could only be patient for so long on Christmas morning. She gently urged him as he was slow to get out of her bed, the awkward position it’s small size caused him to sleep in causing his muscles and joints to be very tender. Knowing he wouldn’t be able to get himself fast enough for Lyta’s eagerness he just gestured to her door and urged her to go see her mother.

He hobbled over to her door to help her open it and Lyta bolted like a racehorse out of her gate to her mother, whose voice of delightful surprise urged the guests to finish getting dressed for Christmas day.

The youngest children were allowed to open one or two gifts while the adults grabbed breakfast, Helena talking excitedly about the presents she received and helping Lyta open her gift before church: a thick cardboard book for children about polar bears.
Steve, still in his clothes from last night helped Diana start fixing breakfast: pancakes and cinnamon rolls.

“You didn’t come to bed last night,” Diana said gently in a tone subtle enough not to draw attention to what she was talking about. But that arch of her brow told Steve that she was anticipating something with him last night after all the guests were asleep.

“Sorry, I sort of passed out in Lyta’s room. I’m regretting that, though,” he said pragmatically as he shifted an aching shoulder.

Diana smiled and rubbed his back in small circles, “Serves you right.”

He did feel the dirtiness and uncleanliness that came along from sleeping in your day clothes and he had sped off to his bedroom as soon as the pancake batter was mixed for Diana to put on the griddle.

“Running late for something?” Selina asked at the kitchen counter over some coffee, still in her silk monogram pyjamas. Diana glanced at the clock, “He’s trying to make it to church in about an hour and a half. Getting Lyta ready will take at least a third of that time.”

Lyta wasn’t in the habit of avoiding getting ready for the day. But she sometimes got a little too excited in the morning, getting more lively as the sun drew more brighter. As the girl grew older and understood the concept of what being an adult meant, she now tried her hardest to be patient with her parents as they got her dressed. It still often wasn’t enough.

Sure enough, they could hear Lyta chatting nonsense from the room where Steve had taken her to get dressed, the image of Steve wrestling a shoe onto her feet while she talked and talked like she was expecting conversation, sparked a bit of laughter in Selina and Clark.

Moments later Steve walked into the kitchen with Lyta at his side. He was dressed nicely in a suit and tie, hair combed, and beard trimmed and Lyta was wearing a little dress with white stockings and saddle shoes, waddling through her overstuffed coat and mittens.

A few of the women gave coos of delight and remarked how adorable Lyta looked.

“You look so pretty, Lyta,” Lois said to the girl with a wide smile.

“Yeah, she’s looking nice for church this morning. Right, Lyta?” Steve’s eyes followed Lyta, watching as she wandered in a tight circle near him.

“Yeaaaahhh.”

Diana would normally go with them, enjoying the sharing religious ceremonies with Steve’s family, as she delighted in her own worship of her gods. She liked to dress up and find her daughter and paramour dressed just as handsomely for the congregation. Steve himself had rekindled an interest into the Catholicism in which he was raised, but he felt it was equally important for Lyta to understand many avenues of faith and encouraged Diana to take the lead in the overall spiritual health of the girl.

That said, Lyta seemed to love certain Bible stories as much as she loved Greek myths. Her favorites being Noah’s Ark and any of Aesop’s tales. She liked any tale where animals were the
The girl’s eyes found her mother in the room of adults. Although Diana was beaming at how beautifully polite Lyta looked dressed up, Lyta was not as amused by her mother’s state of attire.

“Mama?” Lyta asked turning to her father in confusion, so used to seeing her mother dressed up around this time as well. But Diana was simply wearing a nice sweater and pants.

“She’s staying here,” he said in his usual warm but not patronizing tone. He made it a point to talk to Lyta like an adult. A slow adult, but an adult still. Due to her age, some would describe it as stern, but not unpleasantly so, and Lyta responded well to it.

Diana, who sometimes didn’t see her daughter for days on end, couldn’t help but speak to her in an adoring fashion. One would think it would confuse the child, but Lyta seemed to have different wants and needs that couldn’t be met by just one of her parents. And that was the beauty of it. They both felt needed by her, that they belonged in this happy place with her.

“I have to stay here to take care of Unka Bruce, and Lois and Clark and everyone,” Diana explained to her three-year-old gently. “Theia Tracy and Ian and Allison are going though, and you’ll be good for Bampas, okay?”

The girl giggled through her toothless smile, no one ever sure if it was out of delight or mischief.

Tracy’s family got finished getting ready for church, all dressed very finely in suits and conservative dresses and coats, and standing in the hallway entryway.

“Whoa, take a look at this family here!” Clark said at the very formal looking family.

“Well, the Trevors make one handsome group,” Diana chuckled as the Trevors began donning their coats to leave for church. It was then that she walked away from the kitchen and allowed herself to steal a quick kiss goodbye from Steve, before doing the same to the top of her daughter’s head.

“See you soon, my loves.”

It was now Helena’s turn to be the center of attention. The girl went through phases. She could be very shy and quiet, but when you got her on a passion of hers she could be quite lively. She had her father’s passion, just, as Diana and Clark mocked, she expressed it in a much healthier way.

“Come get something to eat, babe,” Selena beckoned her daughter, who seemed reluctant to move her attention away from her beginner set of Nancy Drew books.

“Do you like your books, Helena?” Bruce asked his daughter in a light voice. A typical voice he took on when addressing his daughter. His turned to the rest of the people eating around the kitchen, “She’s into Nancy Drew right now.”

Clark began laughing uncontrollably and it took a lot for others not to follow. Of course, the daughter of Gotham’s greatest detective would have a fascination with a famous literary detective. Bruce was much the same though. He grew up reading the adventures of detective Sherlock Holmes and he would be lying if he said those books didn’t at least inspire his interest in detective work.

And Bruce admired that Helena found a similar hero, but one younger and her own gender.
Someone she could imagine herself being. Though Helena was not quite at the age where she could read the more complex Nancy Drew novels, Bruce and Alfred had taken to reading some of those to her, until Selina found beginner’s versions at a store one day.

Though a child like Helena would not envy spending her morning at a church, she missed the excitement of playing with another child. Her parents weren’t exactly the type to get on their knees and play with their child very often, and her older foster siblings were oftentimes busy, so she was used to playing at Wayne Manor alone. She may not have felt lonely, Alfred, Selina, and Bruce all supportive and present for her, but Helena liked the opportunity to just share.

“We’ll have to be patient Helena. We can take you up to the loft to play with you have opened,” Bruce suggested, but Diana felt a bit of pity for the girl. Her playmate was gone, and to be left alone while adults mingled seemed unfair.

Diana leaned back against the kitchen counter, a sly knowing smile on her face, “We can go sledding.”

There were hardly any sledding spots around Diana’s home, but not far, if you walk into the woods far enough you’d meet a clearing with a hill near the main road. It was a favorite spot for children off from school during the holidays. On Christmas day, it wasn’t much different, with a few families littered here and there enjoying the cold but tame day outdoors.

The hill wasn’t as large as the hill near Wayne Manor, and Helena had gone sledding in the Alps with her family before. But at the end of this hill was a smaller lump, that, if your sled hit it right, would send you flying.

It was enough to give Helena a thrill as she felt her body lift slightly off the sled as she and her mother hit that lump on their trip down. She began begging Selina to go again and again. Selina was light on her feet. Always has. Always will. The idea of clumsily tumbling into the snow, laughing, after being hurled into the air wasn’t what Selina ever thought she’d ever do in her rather acrobatic life.

But here she was, wrapped in an overlarged winter coat from Steve’s closet (she wasn’t going to ruin her Armani Winter Edition coat that Bruce didn’t remember buying her). Helena changed both their lives, hers and Bruce’s. Bruce was far more ready than she was to acknowledge happiness in their double personas, and Selina wasn’t exactly ecstatic to be a mother, no matter how much she loved her now husband Bruce.

But she warmed to the idea. Selina, seven years on, wasn’t what any would call ‘maternal’. In fact, there was a running joke that Alfred was Helena’s mother. But she supported her daughter, and, in the face of all the expectation that came from being a child of Batman, encouraged the girl to have fun and mischief every once in a while.

As the Kents watched the families play, they couldn't help but think back to when they were the ones everyone looked up to whenever it came to balancing family laugh with being a superhero. They had a happy family, a good son, while Bruce always seemed to be at odds with one child or another, biological and adoptive alike, and incapable of allowing himself to be Batman and a happy married Bruce Wayne. And Diana for a while seemed to hold relationships second. Sure, she would sometimes pine for a life like Lois’, with a loving partner and possibly a baby or two, but far often she desired for something more than herself.
And here Diana and Bruce were, with families of their own, with people whom, through all the complexity, they loved. It was natural to see changes as they adjusted to their new stations in life. Bruce was a lot lighter, and much more of a pleasant person to be around. He would never be overwhelmingly happy, but he was the sure he was the closest he could be, taking his own fate and the fate of Batman in his own hands. Diana allowed herself selfish indulgences, and learned to delegate when those who mattered to her needed her. And when it came to Lyta, no one questioned Steve's capacity as father.

It put his energies where it was needed. Protecting someone innocent. Now it would be only a matter of time before Lyta's Amazonian genes meant that his protection was no longer needed, he can still ask that she hold his hand and be careful as they walked over the ice-covered walkway. He could still be sure that her mittens were secure before he carried her out of his (actually finely running) truck back to their house to find it empty. Steve concentrated on getting Lyta out of her winter wear before allowing himself to ponder where their other guests went.

He didn't have to wonder long before the others returned from sledding, rosy cheeked and sniffing, and Tracy began stewing hot chocolate in a slow cooker, Steve right beside her preparing a roast for dinner, with the left over stew was a side dish.

And after the dinner the children excitedly took their stations by the Christmas tree. Waiting while the adults placed their dishes on the counter. Steve, who liked to have things picked up and put away as soon as possible, let the dishes sit so that everyone could finally open their gifts.

With all the presents lined up underneath; the Christmas tree finally looked whole, it’s lower branches covered by the tower of Lyta's and Helena’s presents.

Because Lyta was at an age where she was developing quickly, the majority of her many presents were education based. Like a talking globe that turned into the night sky from Diana and Steve, a set of farm blocks from Tracy, and a children’s tablet from Bruce that allowed children to draw and learn shapes among other things. She liked the blocks because she could see the many painted cartoon animals on them, but the others she didn’t quite understand the purpose of yet.

Another popular thing to give children Lyta’s age was clothes. And it turns out children Lyta’s age like getting clothes for Christmas as much as older children do. Steve and Diana were thankful though. Lyta was also growing fast, and the less need to buy new clothes for her, the better.

Diana reached under the tree for an oddly shaped present, “How about you open this one Lyta. This one is from Yiayia.”

“Yaya?”

“Yes she sent it with Artemis all the way from her home.”

Yaya was Lyta’s grandmother, Queen Hippolyta. Though the queen hadn’t seen Lyta since she was born, she was the first person to hold Lyta, Steve’s jittery and anxious excitement making the Amazon doctors hesitant to let him hold the newborn first. Just at that moment any qualms or worries Hippolyta may have had about her daughter having a baby vanished. Themyscira had another chance to hear a child’s cries.

Despite the distance, Hippolyta thought often of her granddaughter and was saddened that she was
missing seeing her grow, but Diana had plans to send Lyta to Themyscira sooner than later. Not while she was so young, but in a couple of years Diana would be more comfortable introducing Lyta to her maternal culture. For now Hippolyta resorted to sending Lyta one gift every winter season to open during Christmas; her first, a ceramic rattle in the shape of a cow that was Diana’s when she was an infant.

Lyta’s tiny fingers tore into the wrapping and inside was what looked like a stuffed kangaroo.

“It’s a Kanga,” Diana explained. “They have them on Yiayia’s home. You remember the kangaroos we saw at the zoo a while back?”

“Roooo.”

“Right, Kangas are like Roos but slightly different.”

During her mother’s explanation, Lyta’s quiet focus was on the stuffed animal, analyzing and unsure, how she usually was around new and unfamiliar things. Steve smiled, and reached towards her from his chair. “Here, Lyta, can I see?”

Wordlessly, Lyta brought the stuffed animal over to Steve who promptly gave it a quick inspection to make sure none of Lyta’s more militant Themysciran aunts hadn’t hidden a miniature weapon for her as an extra present.

When it was the adults’ turns, it began with Clark giving Bruce a monthly whiskey subscription box and four tickets to a Gotham Knights playoff game (not that Bruce couldn’t acquire such tickets easily anyway, but he wasn’t about to point that out). Subscription boxes seemed to be the theme this year, with Tracy giving her brother a monthly beard grooming supply subscription and Lois giving Diana a subscription to a magazine publication detailing the modern art world.

Some of the gifts were more heartfelt, Tracy in tears when she opened her gift from Allison; a letter of acceptance Allison received to attend George Washington University on scholarship. Ian and now Allison were the first Trevors to be accepted to universities right out of high school. The pride and memories of the turmoil Tracy had in raising both of them alone and undereducated, she couldn’t hold all that in.

Allison was met with congratulations from the others, but to Tracy it was about something more than just her going to a prestigious university. Given her life, single mother of two, from a small unknown town in an often forgotten American state, no college degree and only a certificate from the local Catholic finishing school, the chance her children would be given such opportunities were slim.

Before Steve met Diana he had a career in the military that was somewhat storied for his age, and all of that drive was because of his sister’s circumstances. He wasn’t going to let her struggle in the city with a young baby and another on the way. He brought her to San Diego during is S.E.A.L training so she and her kids could be close by if and when they needed him. Just the comfort of knowing someone close by would be there for her, lowered Tracy’s stress and she began to feel more in control of her life and the lives of her children. Steve got her a job with the Carmelite Monastery, her history with her own education through the Catholic church more valued there. She helped handle public relations, not the most demanding job as it was a nunnery but they did many community events and fundraisers, so it was an important job.
Her work there helped springboard her to a career in the government in public relations departments. It was hard work, and she had help from her own hard working brother, but here her children were, off to more possibilities than what was given her or their uncle.

It was then Diana’s turn to open her gifts, people shifting in their seats as she excitedly opened them.

Diana was incredibly hard to buy gifts for, even for the people who knew her the most intimately. It was the pressure that made it difficult. How the hell was someone supposed to find something that could impress a Princess of an island paradise? She was always grateful, no matter the gift, but still no one knew what the hell to get her.

Lois played it safe with the magazine subscription, but the journalist was confident it was not a gift gone to waste. Clark gave her a pressed flower from Gemworld, something she’s long wanted to see and the Waynes...well this time Bruce didn’t try to buy her a yacht at least.

He learned by now that the one gift that Diana didn’t appreciate was an over-extravagant one with no purpose or reason or meaning. For the sake of extravagance. Diana appreciated aesthetic, something she and Bruce had in common that, judging by the mishmash of Grecian modernism with what could be described as old country home cabin, Steve did not have with her. But even as a Princess of a mystical island with untold treasures, Diana did not like excessive, pointless flair. And yes, a yacht for Wonder Woman, even as a fun thing to do during days off, was pointless.

The Waynes gave her a little wooden St. Nicholas they bought at a Christmas shop in Munich. There was something about the craftsmanship, rough and imperfect in some areas, that they correctly thought Diana would enjoy. The lightly faded paint on the jolly dimpled cheeks, to the detail in the holly leaves around St. Nicholas, was simple imperfect and warm. Just like the parts of her house that felt like a backwoods home. Just like her blond paramour reaching over to give her his gifts.

He handed her a small box and a white envelope. Diana opened the small box, eyes widening as she saw the contents, before she showed everyone inside was a pair of earrings made of silver and gems, sparkling in the light of the tree as she held them up.

“It’s earrings, I got with Lyta’s birthstone and Themyscira’s royal stone,” his voice said tightly. Upon closer inspection, the earrings held of a very simplified design of a mother holding her child: the head of the mother represented by a flickering ruby, the official stone of the Themysciran royal house had silver arms reach down around a large turquoise gem.

Though Diana was often appreciative of the gifts bestowed upon her, this one was the first one in a long while that truly took her breath away. Her eyes misted as she could only glance at the explanation of the meaning from the card in the box before her eyes met Steve’s, who took a breath.

A few shifted in their seats at Diana’s display of emotion as a tear rolled down her cheek and Steve rejected it, motioning for her to open the envelope. “Well, don’t break down on me, Angel, until you open that.”

Diana did so, her brows furrowed while she tried to interpret what she was holding. Steve cleared his throat. “It’s, well, it’s more a gift for Lyta, but technically it’s a trust fund I’ve put aside for the
both of you. You know...in case something happens to me.”

Understandably, Diana frowned. “Why? Is there something I should know?”

Steve shook his head, “No, no, not beyond the usual stuff. But I won’t be here forever and I can at least provide you and her a safety net. Better to have it than not.”

The rest of the room seemed to agree with Steve on that. The dangers of their respective work, Clark and Lois set aside a good amount for Jon if something were to happen to them. Likewise, Bruce Wayne had a similar trust for Helena (though Helena’s was far far bigger). Selena had some of the valuables she held onto from her thieving days as an extra fallback for her and Bruce reluctantly turned a blind eye on that.

Diana was about to say that she didn’t need it, but Steve worked hard, especially during the last couple of years to make this fund a reality. She wasn’t going to throw away all that effort.

“Thank you,” Diana said, sadness in her eyes as she gazed at him. “I wish you wouldn’t worry too much about us.”

“Well, now I won’t,” his head jerked away from Diana’s gaze to Lyta who was trying to crawl up onto the piano bench next to her Aunt Tracy. Tracy helped her up and played a quick jaunty version of Jingle Bells for her, the girl giggling and slamming her hands on the keys trying, but obviously failing, to copy her aunt.

Tracy laughed and brought Lyta to her lap, away from the piano, and announced, “Steve’s turn.”

Diana reached over to a small pile of presents, namely a very thin one with a bow on top. “I want to get you this one first. After...what you’ve given me, this...I feel you should open this from me first.”

Steve leaned forward in his chair and took it, making hard eye contact as he said, “You didn’t have to get me anything.”

Diana’s lips tightened in a severe line as she quipped back, “You’re lucky there’s children around because I have several choice swears I could give you right now.”

Steve tore into the paper and the smile of brief satisfaction of riling Diana up disappear as he looked at the gift. It was a vinyl record inside a plain brown sleeve, but he looked at the labels inside and he knew.

“It’s a record with some holiday songs you recorded for the USAF charity album before we met. I was able to track down a copy and have it recorded on vinyl. Side B is some recordings of your mother’s songs you had. So...Lyta can get a chance to hear her other Yiayia’s voice.”

Steve had a small but very enjoyable talent in singing. He wasn’t as bashful about it in his younger years, but over time singing became one of the last things on his mind. He rekindled his talent for his little girl...and on occasion to further woo Diana if she was cross with him.

His talent was an extension of his own late mother’s rather muse-like singing. She was, and Steve would be the first to tell you, unconscionably a better singer than he was. Steve and Tracy’s mother would have gained some recognition if that was something she wanted to do. But it wasn’t. Steve’s mother was a pilot, and a protector of her community. Singing professionally was the last on her mind.

Tracy’s eyes started to water, mostly in response to the very obvious emotion Steve was trying to...
contain. Not only was it a gift that brought back the voice of someone most dear to both of them, but they knew the effort Diana must have gone through to get this all completed without Steve knowing.

“Do...do you like it?” the Amazon sounded uncharacteristically nervous, like she wouldn’t know how he would react to these remnants of his past.

Steve cleared his throat and his emotion. “I love it. I…” he stood and embraced her, there, in front of everyone. Steve was always a bit touchy about public displays of affection in front of her coworkers. “Thank you. It means a lot.”

Diana’s eyes fell on Tracy, “I’ve gotten a copy for you as well, if you don’t mind.”

“No. I would love it...”

“...more for Mom, than for Steve,” Tracy added after an intimate pause to lighten the mood. There were still other presents to hand out after all. “Here, want me to put it on?”

Tracy stopped the music playing from Steve’s phone, and opened the record player in the far corner. As the music began, Diana pulled Lyta onto her lap.

“That’s your other Yiayia,” Diana explained gently. “Yiayia Trevor. That’s her voice. Isn’t it pretty?”

Lyta seemed a bit distracted to give an answer, but the girl would turn every once in a while to the speakers. At the very least she found the soft ringing that came from them intriguing.

Steve leaned back in his chair and turned his head to observe outside, “Well, it’s dark enough for the fire for Diana’s sisters.” He rocked back and jumped to his feet in a large burst of energy that he didn’t know he had.

Steve indulged a little of man’s delights. Such as starting fires for...not exactly logical reasons. Sure he could come up with excuses, but the fine arrangement from tall lumber outside all pointed to the very trait that seemed to pass down to most males...he liked making big fires.

“I got the A-frame going, already” Steve announced as he opened the closet for warmer gear. “Still need some help prepping it.”

Clark gave a glance at his wife, with a silent question.

“Using your eye beams takes away all the fun, Clark.”

“Normally, I’d agree with you, but do you know how cold it is out there?”

Steve’s nephew, Ian, rose to the occasion, having the same inherited fire-loving man traits as Steve, and stepped outside to help his uncle while the rest waited in the warmth of the living room.

Steve and Ian brought out more kindling for the frame, and when everyone had gathered around the wooden structure, Diana lit a long match, hand cupping the heat around it, to protect it from an errant gush of cold wind from the bay, and laid the flaming tip on the kindling in several places. Diana murmured a few phrases in her native language, blessings to the gods to give to her sisters on the wintry eve before others lit theirs.
After the first faint embers sparked the larger logs at the base of the frame, the fire spread to the rest of the structure fast and before long it was engulfed in flames, a powerfully warm light in the night sky to the cries of excitement from their guests, as they stared up at the tip, embers licking into the sky.

“Come, little one,” Diana held out her hand for her daughter. Lyta obeyed, her mittened hand held by Diana’s graceful ones, before being pulled up into her arms. Diana tilted her head up at the sky, watching the embers of the fire fly into the stars, a wistful smile on her face, almost as if it was just her and Lyta on this shore, watching this fire. “Your sisters and aunts are lighting the same fires. To bring light to the long dark days of winter solstice. Your Yiayia is probably standing in front of a fire just like this one.”

“Yaya!”

“Mhmm,” Diana nodded, chuckling in her throat.

In respect, everyone fell into silence in respect, the crackling of the fire and the light wind rustling through the trees the only sounds for miles. Before it was to be interrupted.

“Oreo!” Lyta burst out excitedly suddenly in the silence. Everyone glanced down at the girl, trying to understand what she was referring to.

The girl was pointing her mittened hand to the sky. “Oreo! See Oreo!”

“Oreo?” Lois asked behind her smile.

Diana turned her head towards the sky. Perhaps Lyta was pointing at the stars, the constellations. Perhaps it was one of the most prominent ones in the winter night sky.

“Orion?”

Lyta dropped her hand and lowered her voice as if in confirmation. “Oreo.”

“You see his belt?” Diana asked over the chuckles from the adults.

“Yeeessss,” the little girl replied as she looked down and began kicking her boots in the snow. Diana leaned down, her black curls tumbling, dotted with white flakes. “And what was Orion, little one?”

“Iss huntaaa” Lyta replied confidently.

“A hunter, that’s right,” Diana nodded, pleased that her daughter had taken well to her stories about the stars and the sky.

In the distance, they heard a cooing of a seabird, comforting among the blackness of the water on the horizon that reflected the moon. Diana held her daughter’s hand tighter, mentally wishing her people a happy solstice.

Although the fire made the cold more bearable, Lyta was starting to rub her eyes and get fussy, a good sign that she was tired and ready for bed. While Steve brought her inside, the others lingered outside to help extinguish the large fire before the locals got nervous.

It was late enough by the time Helena could not longer keep herself awake and Bruce carried her to bed. He assured her that he and Selina would be along soon enough, and after a round of eggnog, the families too turned in, all of them leaving for their homes early the next morning.
Tonight in proper sleeping attire, or at least pyjama bottoms, Steve crawled into bed with a loud groan, one that often made Lyta giggle as she thought it sounded like a bear growl. Diana quietly entered several minutes later, voiceless as she got dressed in her own pyjamas. She was lost in her own thoughts, about her island home. She promised herself not to think much of Themyscira while Lyta was this young and still developing in the mortal world.

But another Christmas has gone by, and another year closer to when she would take Lyta across the barrier to visit the place she was born. And there was a large possibility that Lyta would stay there for more than a couple of years.

It would be the hardest for Steve. While there were temporary exceptions made for the birth of Lyta, currently, Themyscira could not accommodate a male resident. He would have to stay in the U.S. and away from Diana and Lyta. However, Diana was Wonder Woman, she would let Steve see their daughter as often as she could possibly arrange. Lyta would miss her Bampas terribly and it was never Diana’s or the Amazons intentions to separate a child away from her doting father.

Diana threw back the blankets and slid in as stealthily as she could so as not to disturb Steve, who had his eyes closed. He may have had them closed but he could tell, by her silence and the way she climbed into bed, that something was on her mind.

“You miss your family,” Steve said tiredly, a statement after years of knowing Diana, and what tended to bother her. “Your childhood one.”

“They live and that should be enough,” Diana replied rigidly. She stopped herself from speaking further about Themyscira lest the conversation turn into a discussion on Lyta seeing the island.

Not tonight, she thought, settling in at his side, arm across his chest, forehead against his shoulder. “I have want for nothing right here.”

Diana held him a bit tighter, only relaxing her grip when he sank deeper into the mattress. Tomorrow, she would take Lyta to see Donna and Cassie and allow Steve to sleep and rest through the day. It wasn’t unusual for Steve to have days like that, shut in his room, usually sleeping or trying to. He usually reserved those days for when Diana took Lyta somewhere for the day (Lyta would get worried if she spent the day at home without seeing her father, often babbling and calling for him through his bedroom door while Diana tried to pull her away). After the past few days, she could tell he needed it, the strain of entertaining through the holidays killed his energy more than usual.

Steve rolled over, his chest facing hers and his arm slung heavily around her waist. He looked into her eyes but said nothing, reminding her that the exhaustion he felt today wasn’t weariness, but pleasant like after a day of hard work. And he should be rewarded with a nice rest in bed next to the woman he loved. Steve allowed himself to stroke Diana’s hair and cheek, murmuring breathlessly before he drifted off to sleep. “Thank you, Angel. For things I cannot count or comprehend, and I love you.”

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