Come Back To Me

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Summary

After falling for Kyra and being forced to kill her lover, Kassandra tries to flee Mykonos before she gets too wrapped up. But Kyra makes her face both her guilt and the love that she shouldn't let go, for neither of them could ever form such a connection with anyone else.

Notes

So this story takes place right after A Night To Remember (it is canon up until then). This is my first fanfiction, so I hope it's okay. Not sure how often I will update, I'm pretty slow. Please leave a comment or kudos, it would make my day! Thank you and enjoy.
Chapter 1

Kassandra stood with her back to the Adrestia facing Mykonos Island, taking in its beauty one last time; the delicate pink flowers, the water which flowed between houses. The sun was just meeting the horizon as it fell, highlighting the edges of trees in a warm glow. It certainly had a unique appearance, one she had never seen before. But it was breathtaking to look at.

She had decided to stay at a local inn last night; her intentions were originally to sail away that night, but the rebels were, albeit unsurprisingly, very enthusiastic partiers (to put it lightly). Kassandra had found herself slurring her words and seeing double before she knew it. Even in her state, she knew she was in no condition to travel on a ship, let alone command one. She had slept until this evening. Despite the fact that most of last night was fuzzy, she still clearly remembered what led her to drink so much in the first place.

She had killed Thaletas. When she had lied to Kyra’s face, giving her best wishes to Thaletas, his lifeless corpse was still there on the beach. The gold and silver metal on his armor, glowing ever so slightly in the soft moonlight; his body, growing colder as the night went on and the warmth escaped from him; his blood, on the sand, being washed away by gentle waves.

Kassandra hadn’t meant for this to happen, for any of this to happen. She wasn’t supposed to have met someone like Kyra. She wasn’t supposed to have fallen in love with her, and she definitely wasn’t supposed to have killed her lover. It was too much.

“Why did he have to be a Spartan?”, she thought. It was stupid of her to think that a Spartan - especially one like Thaletas - would let what she did go. She tried to keep reminding herself that she had no choice, that he forced her hand. It was true, after all. If she didn’t kill him, she would have died. Either way, things ended badly for everyone involved.

As Kassandra peered upwards, gazing at the Temple of Artemis, a rush of emotions came over her: joy, love, and guilt, mixing together and leaving her frustrated.

“I always hit my targets.”

Maybe Kyra was referring to her then, or maybe she was referring to the Ibex. Regardless, Kyra was right in both scenarios. She had hit Kassandra like she hunted those ibex; quick and effortless. Doomed before they even knew what hit them.

“Finally ready to set sail, captain?” Barnabas spoke cheerfully as he appeared beside Kassandra, placing his hands on his hips as he joined her in taking in the island.

“Yes. Are the crew ready?” Kassandra replied, not breaking her gaze from the temple.

“Of course, but if you need more time -”

“No. I’m ready.” she interjected, not wanting to leave any time for her to reconsider.

This was what she had to do, regardless of what, deep inside, she truly wanted to do. She had to leave, and never come back. Leave before she saw Kyra, before she saw her face. The gods seemed to have other plans, however.

She had only just stepped onto the dock when she heard a yell that made her heart sink.

“Kassandra!”
The familiar voice made her heart beat out of her chest; it made her freeze in her tracks, and broke down her usually strong composure.

She turned slowly, dreading the face she was about to meet.

Kyra was storming towards her, furious. Kassandra had never seen someone so angry. As she came closer, however, she realised that her face was more one of intense anguish; her eyes were red, her cheeks glinting, still wet. It broke her heart to see her like that, knowing it was because of her. It was exactly why she wanted to leave, exactly what she wanted to avoid.

She stood there frozen, struggling to find her voice.

“Kyra-”

She was interrupted by Kyra’s hands grabbing the edges of her breastplate, forcefully dragging - almost throwing - Kassandra around so their positions were switched. She stepped up to her, pointing a finger in her face as she regained her balance. Kassandra struggled to meet her eyes.

“You… You…” she repeated, struggling to find the words.

“Kyra, please-”

“You killed him!” she finally mustered strained words, emphasising them with a hard shove to Kassandra’s chest, making her stumble a few steps back.

“You killed him, and you were just going to run, like- like a coward!” she tried to shout her words, but her voice broke, tired and strained.

“Kyra, you don’t understand-” she spoke quietly but calmly, finally forcing herself to meet Kyra’s eyes.

“I trusted you, Kassandra!” she ignored Kassandra’s words, her anger finally giving way to sadness. Her brown eyes were dark and desperate with despair, piercing into Kassandra’s soul and feeding her guilt.

“This isn’t about trust, Kyra. I didn’t have a choice, he would have killed me!”

Kyra laughed coldly, a sound that pained Kassandra like an unrelenting kick in the ribs.

“I swear to you, I tried to stop him, but he forced my hand.” Kassandra continued. “Do you think that I wanted to, Kyra?”

Kyra wasn’t looking at Kassandra, as she paced in front of her, rubbing her temples, seemingly in her own world as she mulled over her thoughts.

“Because I didn’t! I would never want to hurt you, Kyra, I swear.”

The overwhelming, frantic thoughts in Kyra’s head, along with Kassandra’s pleas seemed to fuel her anger, as she finally stopped pacing only to meet Kassandra’s face with a surprisingly hard slap that was so loud it seemed to have drawn the eyes and attention of every person in sight. Kassandra’s head recoiled to the side for only a moment. While she recovered quickly, the slap had cut right through her, boring a hole in her heart. They stood in silence for a moment, inches apart, tension thick in the air like smoke, almost suffocating. Kassandra tried to control her breathing, struggling to keep her composure. Her knuckles were clenched tight, knuckles white, as she straightened herself again. She kept her chin up, shoulders squared, but focused her gaze onto
the horizon, past Kyra’s piercing eyes.

“Look at me.” Kyra’s low, quiet words cut through the silence.

When Kassandra hesitantly shifted her gaze to meet Kyra’s eyes, her heart sank again. She wished she had been met with anger, because this hurt so much more. Kyra’s eyes were not harsh and piercing this time. They were soft again in the worst possible way, showing her hurt and grief in ways that words couldn’t. A grief more of the loss of trust, rather than of Thaletas. A softness that not only spoke of her sadness, but of the lingering affection for the woman in front of her that refused to leave. It was a look that betrayed her next harsh words.

“You must leave, now, Kassandra. Leave, and never come back.”

Kassandra stood there speechless, again frustrated with the barrage of conflicting emotions that had hit her in the span of just a few minutes. Leave, and never come back. The way Kyra had spoken with a sense of desperation that spread to her eyes was if, like Kassandra, she had acted before she could reconsider; before her true longing gave way.

“Kyra…” her voice was ghostly, barely a whisper.

Kyra stood there for a moment, searching Kassandra’s eyes as tears welled again in her own.

And then, before Kassandra could muster another word, she promptly walked past her, pushing past her shoulder as she went back to where she had come from. To her own surprise, Kassandra felt anger boil inside her as she watched, frozen, as she walked away. Anger at how Kyra had simply come here to bark at her and leave without giving her a chance to explain.

“I think you should do what she says, Kassandra.” Barnabas once again appeared next to her, but kept his distance as he recognised the anger in her.

She growled low, primal in her throat. Ignoring his advice, she began walking purposefully, determined to catch Kyra.

This wasn’t how it was supposed to go. She had planned everything perfectly, and it was going to go perfectly; but no, she had come here and ruined everything. There was no way she could simply get on the ship and sail away now. Kyra had started this, and now Kassandra was going to finish it.
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

I do apologize for how short these chapters are (which is largely due to my slow writing), but I'd rather not write more than I feel is necessary. I don't want to force things. It also helps me with pacing, which I really struggle with. Although, I do think that they'll get longer eventually. However, it does mean that I'll update more frequently - well, frequently by my standards at least...

Kyra stepped into the abandoned house, swinging the door shut behind her. It was a small house, overrun with vines, but it was quaint. It gave out a comfort in its lack of space. Small pink petals were scattered here and there across the floor, laying beside the remnants of those which had wilted. The floor was bare, aside from a sizeable rug which lay in the center of the room, faded and frayed. The place had barely changed over the years, nor had it housed any residents but dust. It had been a sort of haven for her ever since she was a child. She didn't get many chances to be by herself in the midst of the rebellion - she simply couldn't afford to. But, when she was able to, she escaped to her own personal safe house. It was a source of solace and reassurance when she was afraid or overwhelmed. At the moment, she was considering moving in.

She stopped, taking a slow deep breath. She stood still for a moment, trying to calm herself down and subdue the millions of thoughts and emotions running wild in her head.

“Oh, gods…” she uttered under her breath, overwhelmed. She smoothed her hands over her forehead and her hair, trying to calm herself before she broke down again.

Looking up, she found some comfort. Of the house’s many damages, the ceiling burdened the most. A maze of jagged cracks lead to an opening in the middle, where the moon was settled above in the sky, perfectly aligned. It gave off a gentle glow, softly highlighting the room with the faintest light. She closed her eyes.

Inhale. Exhale.

She opened them again. Peering up at the silver moon, she felt things beginning to slow. She felt calm, almost at peace. Wondering if the gods were taking pity on her, she was quickly proven wrong. The gods were cruel; just as they always had been.

The door swung open as Kassandra stepped inside, closing it behind her. Kyra was speechless. The audacity. Even from Kassandra. She could see her jaw grinding, her fists squeezing, as she stood in front of the door, as if mustering up the courage to speak.

“Are you drunk?” Kyra’s voice was once again thick with venom.

Kassandra didn’t respond.

“What part of ‘leave and never come back’ didn’t you understand? Did I not make myself clear enough?”

Kassandra took a calm step forward, though the white of her knuckles would suggest she was
anything but calm.

“I am not going to leave until you listen to me.”

Kyra didn’t know what to say, as she stood there with her mouth open. She had genuinely expected Kassandra to just do what she told her; it was what she had always done up to this point after all, albeit maybe not because of fear. A part of her was glad she wasn’t now, but that part wasn’t realistic; it was foolish.

“I’m sorry about what happened, Kyra. I am. I didn’t intend for it. But if I didn’t kill him, he was going to kill me.”

“I didn’t have a choice, I swear to you.” Kassandra continued. A moment of silence passed.

“You lied to my face.” Kyra spoke coldly, betrayal and hurt evident in her tone.

“You know that I couldn’t bear to-”

“Why?” Kyra interrupted her with a firm voice.

“Because I couldn’t bear to do such a thing!” Kassandra ended her sentence, the frustration that had been building releasing.

“Because it would kill me,” she continued, her voice softening with sadness, “to see your face change. To hear your voice change. Because of me.” Kyra heard her voice break. It was the most heartbreaking sound.

“I couldn’t see you hate me… although, I suppose I have lost that battle now.” Kassandra searched Kyra’s eyes, wondering if it was guilt or grief that she saw, a reflection of her own.

“I am so sorry, Kyra.”

Kyra didn’t respond. She listened with her arms folded as she looked at the ground. Her fiery demeanor seemed to have diminished for now, but when she saw the sadness in her eyes, she would rather Kyra hate her.

Kassandra waited for Kyra to say something. Silence still hung in the air, however, as she turned her back to Kassandra.

“Please, say something.” Kyra’s silence scared her, made her assume the worst.

Kyra didn’t respond as she mulled over everything that was racing in her mind. Thaletas was dead. Kassandra had killed him. She had no choice, he had tried to kill her. He brought it on himself. But he was dead because of Kassandra. He was dead because of Kyra. Because of them. Because of what they did. That night - under the stars, on the beach.

But it wasn’t just that night, or the morning after. It was ever since that dagger sped past Kassandra’s face, only to provoke a calm line of criticism. It was ever since she returned Kyra’s intense glare with one of mere intrigue, claiming she indeed was Athena herself with spears at her throat. It wasn’t just lust like she had thought, like she had tried to convince herself. It was better, safer, to believe that, but it could not have been more wrong.

“Kyra?”

“You’re looking for your mother, no?” Kyra finally spoke, calmly, with a newfound softness that
took Kassandra off guard after the anger that had so recently possessed her.

“...Yes, I am,” Kassandra replied, frowning as to why Kyra had asked.

“Find her, Kassandra.” she finally turned to face Kassandra. Her eyes were soft, but with a sense of desperation in them. There was a longing hidden behind.

“Find her, okay?” she closed the gap between them, now inches apart.

“You find her,” she placed her hands on Kassandra’s cheeks; it was a firm grasp, but not painful - nor was it intended to be. It shared the desperation that was so evident in her eyes, and now in her voice. Her hands felt familiar on her skin, comforting and heartwarming. It felt right, like they were carved from the same stone.

“...And then, you come back to me.”

Kassandra nodded instinctively, her true desires finally taking control.

“You come back to me, okay?”

“I will.”

Kyra had seemed to be keeping her emotions at bay until now, but when Kassandra placed her hands on top of hers, her strong reassuring fingers interweaving into hers, everything broke down. The walls that she had spent so long building, brick by brick, to keep herself from giving in because it would hurt too much - they fell down with a single touch. A touch that reminded her of all the joy, guilt, love and sadness that she had felt because of her. But it made her realize that she had missed it desperately.

“I promise.”

Tears welled and fell from Kyra’s eyes within seconds, and she leaned her forehead against Kassandra’s, squeezing her eyes shut, hoping she couldn't see her cry. But when Kassandra spoke, a whisper telling her that it was ok, she didn't hold it back. She let it out, allowing herself to release and break down, crying in Kassandra's touch for minutes which felt like hours. When her tears didn't fall anymore, the absence of her quiet sobs leaving bare silence, neither of them moved. Neither wanted to, for the time they spent enveloped in the other's touch never felt long enough.

“Kassandra, I…” her words were breathless, melancholic.

“I know.” she spoke reassuringly. The act of someone understanding Kyra like this, even without words, touched her deeply; it evoked an immense appreciation that she could only dream of expressing. It was a sort of affection, a sort of tenderness that she had never felt before. It made her fall even more.

Kassandra unlocked her fingers after gentle squeeze, a reassurance that she would not leave her, and moved them to Kyra’s cheeks, her thumbs stroking them softly. Kyra sighed, closing her eyes and leaning in to the touch.

Kassandra wanted nothing more than to close the gap between them, between their lips. She ached to take Kyra, feel her skin on hers and never part. But she didn’t have the upper hand here, nor did she deserve it. She stood still, allowing Kyra to take control, to let things unfold as only she desired.

Kyra opened her eyes, her gaze fixed on Kassandra’s lips. Her fingers traced the outline of her ear,
tucking stray hairs away. She met Kassandra's eyes once more. They held a rare softness in deep amber, a softness reserved only for her.

With a sharp inhale, she finally allowed herself to give in.
Their lips finally met in a soft yet desperate kiss, a feeling that both had missed like no other. In a few days a lifetime had passed. It almost felt wrong; not just to Kassandra, but to Kyra. It felt wrong, with Thaletas’ body still on the beach, only just growing cold. But, despite the guilt they both felt, it was inevitable. It always had been. Kyra had learned now that she never truly loved Thaletas. She thought she did, but with each moment that passed with Kassandra, she realised that what she felt for him was merely the sad, withered shell of a love that maybe could have existed in another life. What she felt now was real. It radiated between them, enveloping them both. They shared a greed without selfishness, an intense hunger without overindulgence, because it never felt like enough, and it never would be.

Kassandra’s hands travelled all over Kyra’s figure. She burned with the intense need to touch every inch of her so she couldn’t forget how she felt under her fingertips, as to forget how she felt would be to lose her. She pulled Kyra flush against her so there was no space between them, desperate to be as close to her as possible.

Their lips parted as Kyra pulled away, breathless, her hands slowly sliding from the back of Kassandra’s head over her cheeks, moving down to rest on her chest as she gripped her breastplate. They trembled ever so slightly, as did her voice.

“Kassandra, please, I… I…” she struggled to speak her thoughts, her desires, as they lodged in her throat.

“It’s ok.” Kassandra moved her hand to Kyra’s cheek. Kyra blinked, and tears began to fall again.

“Tell me what you need,” Kassandra spoke softly, wiping away tears with her thumb.

Kyra was overwhelmed by Kassandra’s heartfelt affection. The sensitivity and softness she showed in moments like these made her heart swell, made the blood in her veins burn in the best way. It made her angry at how complicated it all was, at how the gods never allowed her simplicity, but held it just out of her reach, taunting and teasing.

“I… I need you to take me tonight. Please… I need you…”

Kassandra cupped Kyra’s cheeks, understanding what she needed - what both of them needed.

“It’s ok. I’ve got you.” she whispered, closing the space between them so their lips could meet again.

Kyra came with a fading call of the woman inside her, her voice taken by an overwhelming pleasure which she lost herself in. No sound escaped her open mouth, as if lost in a vacuum. She grasped Kassandra's forearm tightly, not only for support, but to ensure that she stayed there. Kassandra continued to help her as she trembled against her, slowly guiding her back down to the ground with the slightest gentle movements inside her that tightened the grip on her arm and made Kyra throw her head back. Her voice gradually returned in the form of faint whimpers and shaky breaths. She placed quivering palms on Kassandra's cheeks, studying those glistening amber eyes which were so gentle in moments like these. In the pale moonlight, her olive skin practically shining, Kassandra could have sworn that it was Aphrodite herself beneath her. But, if Aphrodite had appeared with a knock at the door, it would have been a call gone unanswered.
Later, they lay as one, legs intertwined, bodies cradling one another, Kyra’s head buried under Kassandra’s chin. One breathed in, and the other breathed out, and to separate them would be to suffocate them. The world was blissfully quiet; the faint waves in the distance and their breaths were the only sound in the air, but both of them could hear the faintest thumping of a heartbeat, not knowing if it was their own. Kyra had taken Kassandra’s hand to hold between them, tracing every callus and scar with her thumb. When she finally spoke, it was with a calmness that had been missing for days.

“Why did you come here?”

“Because you asked.”

“Not for the drachmae?”

“I liked the way you wrote.”

“The way I wrote?”

“Yes. It intrigued me.”

“Is that so?” she looked amused.

Kassandra smiled softly. The letter was not why she came to Mykonos, or even the drachmae. It was a curiosity that she had never felt before, an urge that told her to go. It was as if the Pythia had whispered prophecies to her in her sleep, beautiful tragedies about a doomed love.

“I was curious as to why you would ask for me along with Sparta.” she continued.

“What makes you say that?”

She didn’t know, of course she didn’t. She often forgot that very few knew who she was. Usually it was met with relief. But now it was met with a sadness, as if Kyra had fallen for only part of her, yet to meet what defined her.

“Sparta betrayed my family. We aren’t on the best of terms. It’s a long story.”

“We have time.” she spoke confidently, ignoring the fact that Kassandra would leave at the sun’s rise because she did not want to acknowledge it. She would not sleep tonight, she would not waste the night away. She would not leave this moment one second too early.

And so Kassandra told her. She spoke calmly about her past, as if it were the memory of another. It didn’t make her overly emotional anymore, because her sadness had slowly been replaced with anger; and as she came to terms with her life, that anger had been taken over by the most damaging indifference. She had learned to subdue her emotions towards it, because they would only get in her way. She didn’t hold anything back, because she knew that Kyra would hold and protect that memory as if it were her own. She knew she would seal it off from the world, conceal it from others, because she was one of the only ones who cared that much.

“I was born in Sparta. So was my brother. My father was loyal to his people, more so that anyone I’ve ever met.” She stopped a moment, to suffocate the anger that was rising.

“When Alexios was only a baby, a prophecy was told that he would bring about the fall of Sparta. My father proved his loyalty then.” she spoke with a scowl.

“We were brought to Mount Tagyetos, and Alexios was to be killed. But I couldn’t save him. I
tried, but I made a priest fall, the one who held him in his arms.” She paused.

“So, he threw me off the mountain too. He grabbed me by the wrist and let me fall to my death. I will never forget his face. And I will never forget my mother’s cries.” Kyra cringed at that, held Kassandra’s hand tighter. She thought of her own mater, her screams which she remembered so vividly. She changed the subject to rid the memory from her mind.

“But you didn’t die.”

“No. Neither did my brother. But he might as well be dead.”

“You carry a lot on your shoulders. I only wish I could carry some for you.”

“You are. I feel lighter, telling you about all this.”

“I am doing the bare minimum, Kassandra. It saddens me that you have not been offered chances in the past.”

“I have grown used to it. It’s ok.” She sounded genuinely content, and it broke Kyra’s heart.

She brought Kassandra’s hand to her lips and kissed her knuckles.

“It shouldn’t be.”

Kassandra didn’t respond, and she chose not to linger any longer.

“What did you mean about your brother?” she felt Kassandra tense again. She took a moment to begin.

“There is… a very powerful cult that has him in their grip. They have control all across the Greek world, and they have been trying to destroy my family for generations. I fear that I have lost him.” Her voice began to weaken at those last words.

“A cult?”

Kassandra looked at her then, almost with an expression of shame.

“You don’t take me for a madman, do you?”

Kyra reached up, placed her hand on her cheek, her thumb stroking softly with reassurance.

“I take you for someone who holds a great burden.” She paused for a moment, eyes searching Kassandra’s. They pushed without forcefulness, looking deeper until she was vulnerable for the first time since they met. And just like that, there were no more barriers, no longer a veil between them. She saw what Kassandra hid, what she was haunted by. And she accepted it, understood it, without hesitation. She held it in the palm of her hand, and Kassandra melted into her.

“You don’t need to be ashamed of your grief,” she whispered. “It is ok for you to hurt, Kassandra. You are allowed to let yourself feel.”

And she did. With Kyra holding her, fragile as a withered petal in her arms, she let herself go. She let herself cry, let herself grieve in the open. For the first time in a long time, she opened up her insides, and rid of some of the pain she chose to keep there, finding some catharsis which introduced itself like a stranger. She had never felt more vulnerable, but in Kyra’s grasp she felt secure. Her tears fell silently down her face, as Kyra stayed under her chin, still holding her hand in hers. Kyra didn’t rush her, nor did she speak or move. She let her take her time, to speak only when
she was ready.

"If I cannot save Alexios," she spoke finally, "my mother is the only one I have left. And I have not even found her yet." Her voice was strained, tired.

"You will find her, Kassandra." she spoke with an unwavering certainty. Kassandra's hand tensed under hers.

"I hope you're right."

"Where will you go now?"

"Keos. There's someone there who might know something about where my mother is."

"Keos? That place is crawling with pirates. They don't take kindly to visitors."

"Believe me, I'm aware. But I can handle myself."

"I know you can. I've seen it. But you bleed just like they do, and I worry."

"You don't need to worry about my death. It is anything but imminent."

"That's not what I'm afraid of," she murmured into the crook of her neck. "I'm afraid of waiting for someone who will never come back."

"You have nothing to be scared of then."

Kyra didn’t speak, but a silent tear fell down her cheek, a sparkle in the moonlight.

"I don’t want you to be in misery because of me, Kyra. That’s what I’m afraid of."

Kyra looked up to meet Kassandra’s eyes. When she saw the fragility there, she sealed their lips with a deep kiss, for she could not bring herself to tell her those fears were true, and she could not lie to her.
Chapter 4

When Kyra woke, it was the sun aligned in the ceiling’s opening. The room almost took on an entirely new appearance in the light, although familiarity could be found where it couldn’t quite reach the darkness in distant spaces. Its intricate details could now be found, however, from the texture of the white walls like goosebumps to the faded patterns of the rug they lay on.

Her cheek rested on an unfamiliar surface now, she realised. Hard, no longer warm. She turned her head to the side. Kassandra was there, still laying beside her, peering up at the ceiling. Her arm was curled around Kyra’s shoulders, holding her close. Her hand absent-mindedly stroked Kyra’s hair, strong fingers with a light touch. She had dressed back in the armor she wore the day before, which explained the unfamiliar feeling on her skin, her cheek on her breastplate.

She thought of how Kassandra had been up long enough to get dressed, and cursed herself for being such a heavy sleeper. She had lost too much time already, hours that could have been spent with her. Dread began to creep in at the realisation that, if she had dressed only to lay back down with her, she was preparing to leave when she woke.

She looked at Kassandra for a moment, who was still staring at the ceiling. There was a reason she had spoke of her as Athena when they met. Her features all held stark contrasts within; her eyes were sharp enough to envy those of Medusa, but when she looked at Kyra in precious moments, they glimmered in a sea of amber, like the sweetest honey. Every line, from her jaw to the bridge of her nose was sharp and defined, but Kyra always noticed how soft they became when she smiled, or when she listened to her, talked to her.

“Look how far you’ve come,” she had said, and Kassandra looked at her with a smile and eyes that had never shone so brightly.

“How far we’ve come.”

She tilted her head up at Kassandra, who turned to look at her.

“Hey.” Kassandra breathed, barely a whisper.

Kyra lifted her hand, placing it on Kassandra’s cheek, and Kassandra closed her eyes briefly at the touch, giving a deep breath.

“You’re leaving soon.” Kyra whispered. It wasn’t a question, rather a declaration, a reminder.

Kassandra took another deep breath. She gingerly moved strands of dark hair behind Kyra's ear, before settling her hand on her cheek. Her thumb stroked there, and Kyra sighed at the familiar motion which always made her melt. She leaned into her palm, delving into her touch.

“I don’t want to.” she spoke with no hope, however, because they both knew that while she didn’t want to, she had to. The inevitability of it all imposed a great heaviness on to the air.

“I know.”

A minute of silence had passed when they both leaned in at the same time to meet in a kiss. It was slow, tender, unlike the intense hunger of the night before. There was no rush. Kassandra began to
feel wetness on her cheeks, tears that weren’t her own, but the firm hands holding her told her not to stop. Kyra rooted her fingers into Kassandra’s hair, a tight grasp which kept her close. She could feel Kyra becoming desperate, frantic; but when she pushed at her, she pushed back just enough to steady her. She would tighten her fingers in Kassandra’s hair, but she would continue her gentle strokes on Kyra’s cheeks. Kyra’s lips reflected her desperation as they surged against Kassandra’s like crashing waves, but she didn’t relent. She kept her pace, slow and deep, guiding her back down to the ground. She held her securely, slowing everything down gradually until they were balanced, Kyra meeting her rhythm. Eventually, just as naturally as the tears ceased, the slow pace came to a halt. Kyra parted, resting her head on Kassandra’s chest.

A wave of guilt crashed over Kassandra then, stronger than it had ever been. She thought of how Kyra had overcome the most terrible tragedies; she grew up an orphan, her mother murdered, only to lead a rebellion to victory. She found out about who Podarkes really was, only to demolish his control with her honour still intact. Not only was the woman unbreakable, she was fierce. She had thrown a dagger right at the mighty Eagle Bearer, and she certainly hadn't missed for a lack of skill. She had downed a cup of wine one minute merely to fight a battle the next, an aim that was better than most could hope to be even when drunk. Kyra had overcome every obstacle that had been thrown at her and emerged without a scratch. And yet, here she was, a million broken pieces that her arms struggled to hold. Because of her.

“I meant what I said.” Kassandra spoke quietly.

“What about?”

“I will come back, Kyra.”

Kyra didn't speak.

“I will.” she repeated, quieter this time, as she began to realise that Kyra would always doubt her. She had lost her trust with what happened to Thaletas - and deservedly so.

Kyra nodded, but her heart clenched, because it was something Kassandra could never promise. There was no certainty in her return, and it scared her. She wanted more than anything to believe that she indeed would come back, but that would be naive. And she knew how cruel the gods could be.

Kyra was standing by the wall then, dressing in the clothes she wore the day before. Kassandra, still on the rug, sat watching her with an arm slung over her knee. Her posture was relaxed, but her eyes betrayed her.

“You could come out to the ship with me.”

“I don’t think that would be a good idea.” Kassandra nodded to that. She looked down.

Kyra looked at her with what could have been guilt, or sadness; or both. It could have even been pity. She made her way over to Kassandra, stopping to stand next to her. Moving her hand to cup her chin, she gently tipped her head up to look at her.

“I doubt your crew would take kindly to me anymore.”

Keeping hold of her, she sat down carefully onto her lap. She moved her hands onto her cheeks.

“That’s not true. They found it entertaining, if anything.”
“You know what I mean.” Kassandra looked at her with remorse then.

“So this is where I leave you, then.”

Kyra’s stomach tossed and turned at that. She averted her gaze in an attempt to conceal the tears that were welling in her eyes. She squeezed her eyes shut for a moment, vowing to herself that she would not cry for yet another time.

She gave a small nod, and dropped her hands down. Shifting off and rising to her feet, she offered a hand to Kassandra. She took it, standing somewhat apprehensive in front of Kyra. In her face she could see a clear misery; red eyes and lips that almost quivered, but despite it all she managed to give a small smile. One that held both beauty and tragedy, like stars in the night sky that had died centuries ago.

Kyra turned then, retreating to the edge of the room to gather Kassandra’s few belongings for her; her sword, bow, quiver and spear. Kassandra appeared beside her, taking and equipping them carefully. Every movement was with hesitation. Kassandra watched Kyra warily, nervous at her silence. They didn’t speak until they both stood facing each other before the door.

“What will you do now?”

“I have people to lead - an island to rebuild.” Kyra paused. Her eyes glazed over in thought for a moment. “But first… I have someone I need to bury.”

A punch to the gut. Kyra’s voice was weak, ghostly, but her words were harsh, sharp like a blade cutting through Kassandra with ease. And maybe Kyra didn’t mean for that. But nonetheless, she was left bleeding out on the ground, opening up her own wounds because it was what she deserved.

“You can’t expect me to leave you like this.” Kassandra spoke quietly, looking at Kyra with remorse.

“You must, Kassandra. I could not be any other way right now.”

“I could stay another night…” her voice faded, knowing it would not fix anything.

“It would be selfish of the both of us for you to stay.”

“Maybe, but-”

“Kassandra,” she cut her off, taking her hands and holding them in her own between them. “I will be ok. Just…” she moved her hands to Kassandra’s neck, under the sides of her jaw. She pressed her forehead against hers, squeezing her eyes shut. “Come back. Okay?” she whispered.

Kassandra held Kyra’s arms above her elbows.

“I promise.”

A moment of stillness passed before Kyra let go. She gently nudged her back with her forehead to separate them. Kassandra took a reluctant step backwards towards the door, a kind of sorrow fixated on her expression.

“Go - the sooner you leave, the sooner you return.”

As a parting gesture, Kassandra took Kyra’s hand in hers. She brought it up to her lips and placed a
kiss on the back of her hand, as she held Kyra’s eyes. They glinted as she began to break.

“Don’t you die on me, misthios.” Kyra choked out.

“I wouldn’t dream of it.”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry, I know this one is super short. Next one should make up for it, though. Thanks for reading!
Chapter 5

Kyra couldn’t bring herself to bury Thaletas herself. She couldn’t bear to see him again, like when she had found him. She would likely never rid the image from her mind, of him face down in the sand, his skin blue where it wasn’t caked in red. So, instead, she had gotten Praxos and some other rebels to bury him for her.

She kneeled in front of his grave, awash with guilt.

“You fool,” she whispered. “You glorious fool.”

It pained her, the way things had transpired. Everything could have been perfect, if Thaletas wasn’t such a hothead. If he had arrived after Kassandra. If she hadn’t been so damned selfish.

She began to cry then, maybe not because of grief, but remorse. Thaletas may have never been right for her, and that was made clear when Kassandra arrived. But she knew that he was a good man - that he deserved better. And maybe he had brought about his own demise, but Kyra could not stop thinking that it was because of her.

She wasn’t angry at Kassandra, nor did she blame her. She knew it wasn’t her fault. Once Thaletas set his mind on something, there was no stopping him. But it had changed things between them, and she feared that it would never be the same. That there would forever be a blemish in their relationship. That every time she laughed with her, touched her, was held by her, there would be that sinking feeling lurking in the corner. That every moment of joy, love, affection, would be coincided with the aftershocks of guilt.

And so, when she later knelt at the Altar of Artemis, the flowers did not remind her of a simpler, sweeter past. They reminded her of the naivety they held mere days ago, joking and flirting. The blind eye they turned to their doom because its importance did not compare then. The flowers no longer brought her peace. They only brought her sorrow.

“Should I be worried, captain?”

Kassandra was snapped out of her daze by Barnabas’ voice. Even with the restlessness of the boat, the chants of the crew and the roaring of the ocean waves, she had once again managed to slip into the depths of her mind. The sun was piercing into her eyes, but she was falling in and out of darkness.

“What about?” she uncrossed her arms, leaning forward onto the railing. Supported on her elbows, she peered out in the distance without actually focusing on anything.

“You.”

She dropped her head for a moment.

“You don’t need to worry about me, Barnabas.”

“Oh, but I do.” he leaned his back against the railing, crossing his arms. He looked at her with concern, masked with a gentle smile.

“You have barely said a word,” he continued, “barely moved a muscle. And yet you seem to have
travelled the whole Greek world in there.” he motioned to her head.

She looked at him then, met with a knowing expression. He turned to the crew, the shores of Keos approaching.

“Prepare to dock!” he yelled out, knowing full well Kassandra was not commandeering right now, despite her position on the deck. Turning back to face her, he smiled.

“I just need you to know that I am always here for you, Kassandra.”

She nodded. There was some comfort in knowing that she could always rely on Barnabas. He was one of the few people she had left.

“I know. ...Thank you.”

“No need to thank me.” He gave her a pat on the shoulder, then looked out at Keos.

“Kassandra,” he continued, “I do hope you’re aware of the pirates that roam these islands?”

“They’re pretty hard to miss - but they’re nothing I can’t handle.” Barnabas laughed at that.

“Oh, I am not doubting your abilities. But I would still try to avoid them as best you can.”

“I’ll be as careful as I always am.”

“That’s what I’m worried about!”

The first thing that Kassandra noticed about Keos was how well it masked its disarray. From outside its shores, it actually looked quite beautiful, with palm trees and crystal waters. But, the black smoke that forever rose from within served as a painful reminder of the chaos it harbored; entire villages turned black, piles of ash that could be the ruins of homes or the remnants of the dead.

Xenia, on the other hand, did not hide the danger and power she possessed whatsoever. If anything, she flaunted it.

“You have some nerve sneaking into my city.” she towered over Kassandra on the overlook, sharp blue eyes under black smudges. She wasn’t used to looking up at people to talk - it put her off.

“I think we both know your pirates wouldn’t have let me in. I needed to speak with you.”

Xenia took a step up to Kassandra, arms crossed.

“Then speak, before I cut out your tongue for wasting my time.”

Kassandra took a deep breath to compose herself. In any other circumstance she would have used her spear to resolve things with a pirate, with how painfully obstinate they could be. But she needed her information, desperately.

“I’m looking for a woman. She left Sparta when I was a child.”

“I’m going to need more than that. A name, for one.”

“Myrrine,” she said quietly. The name always brought a twinge of sadness with it.
She thought she almost saw Xenia smile then, an expression of recollection.

“And who is she to you, exactly?” Xenia asked.

“She’s my mother. I haven’t seen her for many years.”

“Ah. A journey for family reunion, then?”

Kassandra paused, frowning in thought.

“It’s... complicated.”

“Family always is.” Xenia finally spoke with some empathy then.

Kassandra nodded, averting her gaze. She changed the subject, as to not linger.

“Aspasia is the one who sent me.” Xenia gave a slightly annoyed chuckle then, clearly fed up with Aspasia and her advice, which seemed to be a frequent occurrence judging by her reaction.

“Of course she did. Why?”

“She said you might know something.”

“Well, of course. But knowledge is power, misthios, and I do not intend to give it away for free.”

*There it is*, Kassandra thought. She sighed, and prayed that Xenia was not as hungry for drachmae as most pirates were.

“How much?”

She was relieved when Xenia’s price wasn’t one to wipe her out completely, although it was not far off. She took what she had on her belt and handed it over.

“Pleasure doing business with you.” Xenia spoke with a smirk on her face as she accepted the payment, an expression that could only come from someone who lived and breathed for coin.

“So what do you know?”

Xenia moved to lean back against the railing of the outlook before she began. The drachmae seemed to have attributed a temporary benevolence to her.

“Your mother was a member of my crew, once. She left not too long ago.”

“You knew her?” She wondered what could have drawn her mother to someone like Xenia.

“Yes. An amazing woman - waste of a good pirate, however.”

*Of course she was a good pirate.*

“Now, she sails under the name ‘Phoenix’.”

*Phoenix.* The implications of that made her hopeful that Myrrine was coping, at the least, wherever she was. Just to know that was a weight lifted off her chest.

“Do you know where she is?” she asked.

Xenia paused a moment to think.
“She sailed southeast on her ship, ‘Siren Song’. Last I heard, it was docked at Naxos.”

Her heart skipped. Naxos wasn't far. She felt an excitement rise within her, but suppressed it as she caught herself getting her hopes up. Doing that had never ended well in the past, and so she had taught herself to try and remain indifferent. It would still hurt, but having hope crushed was agonizing, and she could not bear to feel that type of suffering again.

“I think I have what I need. Thank you.”

With a small nod, she turned to leave, but stopped when Xenia spoke again.

“Remember, misthios - home isn’t a place, it's the people you're with. If you don't find what you're looking for, I’m sure there's a place for you here.”

She nodded again in gratitude, but turned and walked away, knowing she would not return.

Later, as Barnabas sailed towards Naxos above deck, Kassandra lay alone in her bunk. The faint glow of a candle, the only thing standing in the way of darkness. With time, she had grown used to the rocking that came with the sea. It was even comforting at times, a sway that lulled her to sleep on the rare occasion she had the opportunity for rest. But now, even with the sea gentle as ever, she lay wide awake. She decided then to dwell on memories she was trying to forget, in the hope that it would help.

“Kassandra?”

Following the call, she found Kyra in the darkness of the night, wearing a grin that resolved every tension within her, every anxiety in its beauty. But it made her shiver, because it was meant for her, and no one else.

“Kyra.”

She made her way over to where Kyra leaned against the stone, elbows propped up to look out at the city. She took a place next to her.

“It’s good to see you,” Kyra spoke calmly, genuinely. She continued to peer out at the city, studying it in awe as if viewing it for the first time. She held a soft, natural smile on her face.

“You too.” she gazed with the same admiration, but not at the city. “What are you doing out here so late?” she asked. Kyra chuckled, a sound that took the chill out of the air.

“I could ask the same of you.” Kyra looked at her, eyes shining even in darkness, and words were taken from her mouth.

“I…”

“Were you looking for me?”

“No.” Kyra smiled, and it was all it took for her to yield.

“…Maybe.” Kyra gave another soft laugh, and looked back out.

Some silence passed, but it was comfortable. It didn’t feel empty, as if there were still questions and answers passed between them, without words.
“What are you thinking about?” Kassandra asked.

“Not the rebellion, I’ll say that much.”

“Does that include me?”

“Well... Have you been fighting for our cause, Kassandra?”

"I would like to think so."

“Then yes, that does include you.” She paused. “So... I suppose I was thinking about the rebellion, in that case.”

“Is that so?” Kyra looked at her with seriousness before her smile broke through again. She averted her gaze back to the distance. Kassandra studied Kyra’s eyes, which were far away again.

“I don’t want you to regret last night.”

Kyra looked at her. There was no judgement, only understanding.

“Is that what you think?”

“...I don’t know.” she said, the most innocent naivety plastered on her expression.

Kyra moved to stand, facing Kassandra. Holding that same gentle smile, she whispered.

“Oh, misthios,” she reached up, fitting her hands on Kassandra’s cheeks like they were meant to be only there, and nowhere else. “You have no idea.”

It didn't help. She began to realize with great frustration that she would find no rest in the immediate future, not until she was home. Until then, every memory brought a sadness with it. As she wiped the wetness off her cheeks, the ship swayed again. The flame went out, and she was left in darkness again.
They walked beside one another along the grass, each with a bow ready. At first, their heads had constantly spun and turned, but in only minutes the hunt was paid no mind except for when the animals danced in their direct line of sight. An ibex was unfortunate and oblivious enough to do so, and Kyra hit it right between the eyes in a flash. Kassandra raised her eyebrows, impressed.

“If I didn’t know any better, I’d think you were a Daughter.” she said. Kyra laughed at that.

“I can assure you, I am not.”

“Artemis, then.”

She rolled her eyes, but when she saw the smile on Kassandra’s face she couldn’t fight back one of her own.

Some comfortable silence passed, with merely the shifting of grass as they walked, before a squawk came from the sky. Kassandra stopped and turned swiftly, bow ready at an ibex far behind her. Lining up her shot, she fired, missing narrowly. With a grumble, she turned and resumed walking. There was another squawk.

“Oh, shut it.” she muttered in annoyance.

Kyra chuckled, amused by their secret conversation. There was something so pure and heartfelt about it, about how Kassandra would talk to the sky and elaborate no further, because she seemed to forget that such a thing was not exactly common.

“Tell me about him,” Kyra said, with a motion to the sky.


“Was he…” she trailed off, not sure how to phrase the question.

“Given to me?”

“I suppose so, yes.”

“I think so.”

“You don’t know?”

“Well, he started following me around when I was small, and he hasn’t left.”

“You seem to have something quite special with him.”

Kassandra gave a warm smile, peering up to the sky where Ikaros was gliding with outstretched wings, drawing circles above them.

“You could say that,” she said, knowing far more than she was letting on.

Ikaros squawked again, and Kassandra swerved around. She didn’t miss this time.

“Excellent shot,” Kyra said, a smile that Kassandra returned.
“Will that be enough?” she asked, lowering her bow.

Kyra became saddened at the realisation that the hunt was over. The time she had to spend with Kassandra was running out all too soon.

“...Yes.” she said reluctantly.

She looked out at the sea for a moment, not far from where they stood. The day was almost at its end, a pink-orange glow resting above the horizon as it cut the sun in half, colours spilling onto the water in reflections. She turned to Kassandra.

“Will you walk with me?”

Kassandra looked at her with something like relief. She accepted without hesitation, with soft words.

“Of course.”

They slung their bows over their shoulders, and moved to the shore, following along the water’s edge. Eventually, finding a spot where the grass met the sand, they sat down beside each other, and Kyra finally spoke.

“I wanted to thank you.” she said.

“What for?”

“For telling me about him, like you did. The rebels would have taken it badly.”

“It was the least I could do.”

“Many would not have the decency. Nonetheless... Thank you.”

Kassandra gave a nod. She hesitated, stumbling over how to ask her the right way.

“How have you been?”

Kyra didn’t quite know how to answer that.

“I’ve been trying not to think about it too much,” she said - the truth, but far from all of it.

Kassandra looked at her, concerned. From a glance at her eyes, Kyra could see she knew she was holding something back. Of course she could tell - she was a fool to think she wouldn't.

“...You’re allowed to talk about him.”

She knew that. She always knew that she could ramble for hours, and Kassandra wouldn’t just listen, but she would hear every word. She knew that there would be no judgement, no criticism, that she would give her only genuine empathy. That’s just who she was, and it was one of the reasons Kyra had fallen so far. But she found she couldn't.

“I know. I just... I don’t know what to do.”

Kassandra nodded. She gave a deep breath before speaking, her voice much softer, more vulnerable.

“My father tried to kill me, when I was little.”
Kyra darted her eyes to Kassandra’s, her sudden confession catching her off guard. She shivered at the pain she saw there, one Kassandra tried to hide - but she saw right through.

“I found him again, not so long ago,” she continued, “and I had him, right there. I was going to kill him, but… I couldn’t do it.”

Kassandra sighed, fidgeting with hands that Kyra wished she could hold in hers, to calm her.

“It wouldn’t have changed anything. I would live with anger either way. And I think that is the worst thing he did. Not when he tried to kill me. But when he forced me into a lifetime of hatred, of rage. It is a stain on my existence, and I don’t think it will go away. But I have learned to accept it, for the most part.”

Kyra swallowed the lump in her throat, not knowing what to say. It hurt her immensely to know Kassandra had lived a life so similar to her own, because it made her realise how much pain had come to her. Her own life had brought so much tragedy, so much suffering, and hearing that Kassandra had gone through so much as well - it inflicted such a sadness, to see someone so strong, so resilient be haunted by such a terrible thing.

Kassandra’s tone changed after a pause, more gentle, as she looked at Kyra.

“I don’t know how different your situation is, but... Regardless of what happens with Podarkes, if you’re even somewhat as strong as I’ve seen you be - you’ll be okay.”

Kassandra’s words, the affection with which she spoke, the softness in her eyes - it was all too much. Kyra broke her gaze, bit her tongue, for she knew she would crumble if she delved any longer. She could practically hear the gods laughing at her, as they told her just how much she would lose in the days to come.

“Not to mention,” Kassandra went on, “you have a whole family behind you. Even when this is all said and done.”

“...You’re right,” she said with a sigh. “I just - I just wish it could have been different.”

Kassandra nodded, and spoke with remorse, with the expression of someone who felt the exact same way.

“I know.”

Her voice weak as she was, Kyra spoke.

“Sometimes, I wonder what I did to dishonour the gods so terribly. And sometimes, I think - what more could they possibly take from me? But they always find something. Or they give it to me, something too good to be true, and it always is.”

“The gods are wicked.”

They looked at each other, sombre in the knowledge that another good thing would be crushed, all too soon. Kyra took a deep breath to gather as much of herself as she could, and asked Kassandra what she had been longing to know for days. Or more, what she had longed to hear her say.

“Why did you stay, Kassandra?”

“To help you.”
“We haven’t even paid you yet.”

Kassandra averted her gaze, hesitating before she spoke.

“...I forgot about the drachmae long ago, Kyra.”

“But you’re a mercenary.”

“Sure.”

“So why did you stay?”

Kassandra looked at her once again, solemn.

“I think you know why.”

Kyra’s breath caught in her throat. She knew that was what she would say. She knew all along, and yet hearing it was so overwhelming. Rising to her feet, she walked a short distance to the edge of the water. She folded her arms, feeling the pounding of her heart as it continued to break with every breath. Kassandra soon appeared next to her, keeping some distance with the fear that she had said too much.

“You made this so hard.” Kyra whispered, looking out with distant eyes at the sunset. Kassandra didn’t know how to answer that, as a tense silence lingered.

That was harsh, Kyra realised immediately. This was not Kassandra’s fault, not anybody’s. She knew this was all doomed from the start, but she didn’t pay it any mind. She chose to dive into this willingly, because the end of it all seemed so far away then. She spoke again.

“This will not end well either way. But I am trying to accept that. I will let the fates come when they may, cruel as they are.” she paused, taking a breath. “But until then... I know what I want.”

“Kyra...”

She turned to Kassandra, stepping up to stand close to her.

“There’s a spot down by the water. It's quiet. We'd be alone. What do you say?”

There was a terrifying moment of silence, before Kassandra reached out her open hand.

“Show me.”

Taking her hand, she found warmth and comfort like Kassandra held it in her palm, in fingers that locked perfectly with her own. She swore not to part from her. She would not leave until the fates came upon them and pried them apart with their own cold hands.

- 

Kyra forced her eyes open again, still wide awake, as she had been for most of the night - except now, the sun had risen, and another day was on the horizon. Sleeping in a bed was so incredibly foreign to her - despite its comfort, she had not found much sleep in it.

As if by instinct, her eyes immediately settled on what had provoked her to remember that night - her bow, against the wall. Everything was a reminder of her, each its own separate memory ensuring they would never die. She looked at the empty wine jar on the table, and as that night rushed over her, a familiar heartache reared its ugly head again.
It was peacefully quiet then. The air was still, only the sounds of light waves weaving around their voices naturally. A small fire radiated light and warmth between them, swaying ever so slightly. There was a jar of wine on the sand which had gone empty long ago, the only honourable quality of the Athenians coming and going in a fleeting moment.

“Sokrates isn’t so bad,” Kassandra continued, finally redeeming the philosopher after her slander in the way only a friend could. “You just need to know how to handle him.”

“Is that what this is? You know how to handle me?” Kyra asked, half-joking but genuinely curious.

For a moment, Kassandra looked at her with worry, before peering down into the empty cup in her hands.

“...I could only hope to do that,” she said quietly. She put the cup down and looked back at her. “I don’t think anyone could handle you, Kyra.”

She raised her eyebrows. Is that not what she had done? From the moment they had met she was blasé about everything. Spears at her throat, surrounded, and she didn’t flinch. She had the respect to tell her about Porarkes in private. Kyra had almost taken her anger out on her then in a moment of emotion - and she had a feeling that she would have taken it willingly if she did. But the more she looked back at the past few days, the more she began to see why Kassandra thought the way she did.

She thought of how, on the ride together to Delos’ treasury, she could feel Kassandra’s heartbeat with her back pressed against her, a thumping that made her comfortable about the racing of her own. She felt how fast it beat, as if she had run up and down mountains, when she barely caught a sweat fighting off hordes of Athenians. She saw how she reacted to her touch, a tension that softened as she relaxed. It all stood out to her, because it was a mirror image of herself - she felt the same way, reacted the same way towards Kassandra. She longed to tell her of how she was set ablaze when her eyes met hers. Of how she sunk into a puddle on the ground when she smiled, at no one else but her. Of the lengths she would go to for that woman that she only met days ago. But her thoughts lodged in her throat every time they rose, forced back to wreak havoc in her mind.

“Even you? The mighty eagle bearer?”

“Maybe, but... that’s not who I am.” Kassandra looked down again.

“How so?”

“The eagle bearer isn’t real, it’s... a show, a mask.” she paused, meeting Kyra’s eyes with seriousness. “Is that how you see me? As a stranger would?”

“No.”

“Then say my name.”

A flame sparked within her then, despite the chill that rushed over her. Her mouth went dry, and she struggled to find her voice. She found herself being pulled to her, falling into her eyes, darker now but so inviting. Her mind raced, even considering taking her right then - but she found she couldn’t move.

“Kassandra,” she whispered, more a breath than a word.
“That is who I am. Just a mercenary.”

“I would disagree.” she almost scoffed. Kassandra was might personified, if not more. She had seen it first hand.

“I may be good with a sword, but-”

“Some say you’re a demigod-”

“And yet you never fail to make me weak.”

That made her shiver, made her heart sink into her stomach. She didn’t know what to say, or more, she didn’t know how to say that she had broken down her own defenses in the same way. That she was falling for her right now, deeper with every word she said, every look. Kyra was completely defenseless, just as she was.

“Out of all the people I’ve met... You’re the only one who does that.” Kassandra continued, speaking and looking at her with softness. “So, no. I don’t think I know how to handle you, Kyra.”

I wish you would, she thought.

“Is that a good thing?” she asked. Kassandra hesitated, a look of apprehension on her face.

“...I don’t want to step out of line.”

“I’m asking you to,” she reassured her. “I want you, Kassandra. Now, under the stars.”

Kassandra didn’t say a word, but she answered her, closing the gap between them with a deep kiss that spoke of everything unsaid. The jar they had emptied earlier had little effect, but tasting the wine on her lips made her drunk. Kyra pushed her onto her back, and as she moved to straddle her, she heard her breathe out her name.

“Kyra…” she couldn’t stop a gasp from escaping her mouth at the sound of her name, so delicate from her mouth, as if it was only meant to be spoken by her.

Kassandra’s eyes, shades of gold sparkling in moonlight, searched up and down as her hands followed, provoking quivering breaths from Kyra at her touch. She felt Kassandra’s lips come to her neck, and she rooted her fingers in her hair to stop herself from caving in too soon. She shuddered as Kassandra whispered, lips brushing against her skin.

“I’ve wanted you for so long…”

She let out shaky breaths and gasps. It was surreal, this moment - she had expected the exhilaration, the fire in her stomach. But she hadn’t expected the overwhelming affection which made her tremble, made a lump rise in her throat at the thought of the night’s end. The woman that she had spent days and nights thinking of was hers tonight, only hers. And she would let herself be swept away by her. She would let herself be pulled into blind darkness, because it was in her grasp.

Parting just enough to look at her, she held her face in her hands. Kassandra looked up at her, mesmerised, with a gaze so fragile. A fear hidden in where they glimmered, of the moment they would part.

“Then take me,” Kyra breathed, and she was washed away with the waves.
She stood by the window, the one overlooking the shores. A breeze came in through carrying salt and the sea, the ghost of wine with it, a fabricated smell. As she looked out, she found disappointment, one that she knew would come. Despite the part of her that stayed grounded in cruel reality, there was a hopeful part that died a little more every time she looked out at the docks, only to find them empty again. She almost pitied herself. Just over in the house neighbouring hers, Praxos and the rest of the leadership would be busy working, planning, rebuilding; and yet here she was, sulking and wallowing in her own misery.

She knew that the rebels had expected her to lead after Podarkes was defeated. But there was no great part of her that had ever wanted to take up the position of archon. She was still involved, of course - and many still saw her as the true leader regardless. But she was perfectly content with just knowing Mykonos was in good hands. After all, the reason for the rebellion - in her mind, at least - was not to come to power, but to crush Podarkes and his regime. Her passion stopped there. All she wanted, all she had ever wanted, was peace. She had only gotten caught up into a life of war and constant fighting because it was the only way to achieve it, and now that she finally had some sense of it, she just wanted to live a life free from fear, from stress. But now, even with the rebellion won, she still could not find peace.

Later, as she walked through the city, between bustling markets and strings of white houses, she found some sense of happiness come to her. Ever since Podarkes had been removed from power, she had noticed a gradual shift in the people of Mykonos. Not long ago, there had only ever been fear plastered on the face of every soul, in hushed whispers and eyes that never stopped darting to every corner. No longer was there only an anxious, quiet chatter to hang in the air - people talked without considering every word, and people laughed. Kyra would see actual joy, actual happiness instead of apprehension and misery. There were scattered greetings and thanks spoken to her, in the place of what used to be simple nods and averted gazes.

To know that the people were finally free, finally happy, brought her some joy - a feeling so foreign to her, but so welcome. But with the shores in the distance, she made the mistake of checking one last time, for that brilliant red sail which would fly in the wind atop its hull, which would not be there. Fleeting joy was replaced by a sadness that she brought on herself, and she turned away in a hopeless effort to stop it from growing stronger.
“I fear you’ll break the rail if you grip it any tighter, captain.”

Looking down, she realised he was right. Her knuckles, a pure white, holding on for life itself. She hadn’t even noticed - only then did she become aware of an aching in her hands. She let go.

“Are you nervous?” he asked, a question he already knew the answer to.

“A bit,” she spoke quietly, peering down at her feet so he couldn’t see what she thought was a sign of weakness.

At her reply, Barnabas gave a booming laugh.

“Ha, please! Your heartbeat is as loud as the sea itself!”

She sighed.

“I… I’m scared, Barnabas.”

“You have nothing to be scared of,” he said, a new softness in his voice.

“What if she’s not who I remember?” she paused, and thought. “What if I’m not who she remembers?”

“She is your mother. She will love you, just as she always has.”

Seeing the uncertainty linger in her eyes, he continued on.

“You are the bravest person I know, Kassandra. The bravest that many have known, I’m sure.” He paused for a moment, and smiled, putting a gentle hand on her shoulder.

“If you were my own - I would be so proud.”

She gave a small smile then, one that was weak but genuine. She held a great appreciation for Barnabas; he would never take credit for it, but he was the reason she had gotten so far. Not just because of the Adrestia, but because he had provided the support she didn’t know she needed.

“…What do I even say?”

“The right words will come to you in the moment.”

She looked at him, unsure.

“It does not matter what you say, Kassandra. Your being there will speak for itself.”

Although still apprehensive, she gave a nod. She knew he was right, but there was a part of her that was nervous - scared, even - and she didn’t know why.

Standing in the doorway before the balcony, she found herself frozen in place. There, at the edge,
was her mother - turned away, unaware that her daughter was behind her. The sweet hums that had once lulled her to sleep as a child were carried across the air, and she was in tears already.

There was a lingering thought, a lingering dread, that she would turn and she would not recognise her mother. That if she were to say her name, she would not respond, for she had died long ago. Even with her standing across from her, humming mindlessly with a voice that was no stranger, she still could not come to terms with the fact that she was alive.

Willing herself to step forward, she unsheathed her spear, the sound of sliding metal drawing Myrrine’s attention. She turned. Her eyes settled on the spear Kassandra held out in front of her, the same one she gave her as a child, a burden and a blessing. They turned up to her daughter, reflecting not only in amber but in emotion.

“...Kassandra?” she whispered, so faint, like the name would break if she spoke any louder.

Kassandra nodded as she sheathed her spear. For a moment, Myrrine seemed to forget how to move, how to breathe - but then, as tears began to fall, the life came back to her eyes.

“How?”

Rushing forward, Myrrine took her into an embrace. It had been so many years, and yet being in her mother’s arms was so familiar. Her grasp had the same warmth, the same comfort. It gave her the same feelings of safety. The only difference was that now it was tighter, more secure, to ensure that even the fates would struggle to tear them apart again.

“I thought I had lost you,” she whispered.

Kassandra found she could not wait to tell her any longer.

“Alexios is alive.”

As she felt Myrrine’s grip weaken, pulling away from her all too soon, a wave of dread swept over her. Myrrine looked at her with the same feeling.

“They have him… Don’t they?”

She didn’t have to answer for her to know.

“We must get him back.”

“He’s too far gone…” It hurt her to say it, and it showed as she struggled to say the words without them breaking.

“I lost you both once - never again.”

There would be no changing her mind, she saw. But the same went for herself; she had lost her brother once already, and she could barely stomach the thought of it happening again. If it did, she would lose herself - she would not survive the fall again.

Myrrine seemed to be swept back up again, stammering through tears as she took Kassandra’s hands in her own, as if to make sure she was real.

“It’s really you,” she sobbed. “It’s not some trick of the gods.”

“No-” she choked out. “I found you.”
Myrrine took her back into her arms, and she cried into her shoulder, muffling her words.

“I… I missed you so much, mater.”

“Oh, Kassandra… I missed you too. Every day.”

Taking a step back, she placed her hands on her arms.

“Look at you.” she smiled, and moved her hands to her cheeks. She told her what she never got the chance to. “I am so proud of you, my lamb.”

“I have so much to ask you- so much to tell you.”

“And I want to hear everything. Come,” she motioned for her to follow.

It was only some time later, as they sat on the sand, that Myrrine realised just how far her daughter had come - and it showed. She possessed the same bravery, the same confidence, but beneath it all she saw a mirror image - something far too painful.

“You have grown into an amazing woman,” she said, looking at her proud. “But I see the burden you carry on your shoulders.”

“Finding you has lessened it.”

“As it has for me. But, you remind me of myself.” her expression was sorrowful, and Kassandra frowned.

“How so?” she asked, and Myrrine looked at her with sadness, before speaking honestly.

“You look tired.”

It was no surprise that Myrrine could tell. Despite the efforts Kassandra went to to hide her tiredness in front of others, they were rendered useless in front of her. Usually she would pretend so often that she could fool herself - but hearing it now made her realise just how exhausted she really was. She became aware of just how heavy her eyes were, of how all of her ached - of how she longed to sleep with an empty head.

“Well… I suppose I am.”

“I can see that you have lived a life of struggle. You have suffered so young. It pains me to see that.”

Seeing the look on her mother’s face, she found herself back on Mount Taygetos; she saw the same pain that was evident in her then. Myrrine hadn’t forgotten about that night any more than her, she realised. Just as Kassandra, she may have survived, but a part of her died that night - and every day, there was still an abundance of grief.

Kassandra did not speak, and her worry deepened.

“…What else has hurt you, lamb?”

She didn’t know where to start. Even just since she left Kephallonia, there had been so much. Nikolaos, the Cult, Deimos - and, of course, Kyra. What she thought about most, despite everything else - always on her mind, no matter what.

“I’m scared for Alexios. You should have seen him, mater, he- he…” she found she couldn’t finish.
Myrrine took her hand in her own, letting her take her time in finding the words.

“I failed to save him once already… What if he is beyond saving?”

“You must not give up on him, Kassandra. Never.” Myrrine looked at her with strong certainty, one she could see could not be wavered, and so she nodded.

The doubt did not lie in Kassandra - she knew that herself. It was written in stone all those years ago that she would not give up on him, and it was cemented when she saw him in Phokis. Rather, it was Alexios. There would be nights where she could not sleep because all she could think about was the possibility that he really did die that night. That it was only Deimos, and there was no one left to save.

“We will bring him home, do you hear me? We will be a family again.” she spoke with a firmness in her voice, one that spread to her hands’ grasp.

“I know.”

They wordlessly came to an agreement then, a vow to bring him back. Neither of them could even consider losing him again, and so they chose to turn a blind eye to the possibility. They decided it was inevitable that he would come home so that it would hurt less in the moment, only to forget that it would destroy them if they were wrong - more so than if they were realistic.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry, I know this one took a while - I found it hard to write this chapter, so I'm sorry if it flows strangely. Hope you enjoyed nonetheless!
When Myrrine first suggested that they return to Sparta, to go to Mount Taygetos, she had thought that she was joking. Not only did it seem absurd, it seemed pointless. But the more she thought, the more she began to understand why. Myrrine wanted closure. She wanted to face her fears. And as she came to understand that, she also came to realise that she needed it too. That they could not save Alexios from darkness if they were still in the midst of it.

And so, they planned to return to the place where they had lost everything, to begin to heal. Together. They talked for hours as they rode throughout the island against eventual sunset, their horses slowed to a pace where it likely would have been faster on foot. It was the low hum of chatter, the delicate beauty of the place that reminded her of Mykonos - and she realised she had not yet told Myrrine.

“I only have a few more things to do here,” Myrrine said, “Then - we may go.”

“I might actually meet you there, mater. There is somewhere I need to go first.”

“Of course, lamb. Where?”

“Mykonos.”

“The Silver Islands? What is waiting for you there?”

“I need to see someone.”

Myrrine raised an eyebrow at her vagueness. “And who would that someone be?”

“They- she-” she took a deep breath to find the words. “She means a lot to me.”

A soft smile naturally formed on Myrrine’s lips.

“Well… That is as good a reason as any.”

She was relieved that she would not need to explain such a complicated thing. But, at the same time, she had a feeling that Myrrine could already guess the full story with the way she looked at her.

“It is comforting to hear that you have found people,” Myrrine continued. “Part of me worried that you had shut yourself off, as I did.”

She worried about what that meant.

“You did?”

“Yes. I trusted very few, I never told the full truth of myself. I never became close with anyone.” she spoke with her eyes on the road.

“But you survived.”

“Only just, I’m afraid.”
Kassandra frowned. There was a unique twinge of pain that came with the thought of her mother’s suffering - especially with how strong she knew her to be.

“Why do you say that?”

Myrrine answered her question with another. “Do you know why I never let anyone in?”

“Tell me.”

“I was afraid of losing them. I thought that, if I never got close, I would have no one to lose.”

She had always wondered how her mother had coped. To hear that, she felt like a fool to never have realised that Myrrine would have survived the exact same way as herself. She had always been so much like her mother, and in grief that did not change.

“I felt the same way.”

Myrrine looked at her, brow furrowed with worry. “Do you still?”

“Yes. But I often find that I don’t have the strength to act the same way.”

“That is not a sign of weakness, Kassandra. If anything, it is a sign of courage.”

While she appreciated her words, she struggled to see it in such a way. With her eyes in the distance, Myrrine sensed that she did not believe her, so she continued.

“What I did not realise is that, in many ways, having no one is worse. It can be… debilitating.”

“How can it be worse?” she asked, her disbelief evident in her tone.

“Well… Wouldn’t you agree it is better to have the memory of someone than to not have known them at all?”

There was a moment of silence as she considered the idea. To her own surprise, she found herself coming to understand what Myrrine meant.

“I suppose I hadn’t thought about it like that.”

There was the slightest glimmer of hope in her eyes when Myrrine looked at her.

“I hope you do.”

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*Kyra was pacing amongst the lookout below the temple when Kassandra found her, exactly where she expected her to be.*

“Kyra,” she said as she approached, “I wanted to see how you were-”

“Not here.” Kyra interrupted her. “Please, would you walk back with me?”

The area was almost deserted, so she wondered why she was hesitant to talk - but her eyes promised an explanation, so she trusted her.

“...Sure.”

*Kyra gave her a nod, and motioned for Kassandra to follow as she walked.*
“Thank you. I just-” she lowered her voice. “I don’t trust anyone on these streets. Especially not now.”

“I understand.”

They walked in silence. Kassandra watched her, worried, noticing that she was more tense than usual. Her eyes seemed to dart everywhere, and her features were hardened in a way that she had never seen.

When they reached the entrance of the cave not long after, Kyra seemed to relax, but only in the way she spoke and in how her posture lost its edge. There was still a hidden tension in her that she could sense.

“Thank you for understanding,” she said, appreciatively.

“Of course.”

Kyra continued towards the back of the cave, and she followed behind her.

“He may be dead,” Kyra continued, “but Sparta hasn’t taken hold just yet.”

The way she glossed over her father’s death, like an insignificant detail, made her worry. But she chose not to pry.

With strings of sunken stones in water guiding their path, they made their way into the space Kyra had to herself, away from the others. It was unusually quiet, the echoing of dripping water and flickering flames becoming noticeable in the absence of chatter. She noticed the dolls amongst clutter on the desk. They were hidden, but there nonetheless - she wondered what that meant.

Kassandra broke the silence. “When will Sparta push forward?”

“Tomorrow. It is a battle they cannot lose - it would take two miracles for that to happen.”

The end seemed to be near. Despite how great that was, it was sooner than she expected - and sooner than Kyra expected, from what she could tell.

“And what happens then?”

Kyra fidgeted with her hands for a moment, before she sat down on the bench across from Kassandra. She took a breath, and spoke.

“The rebellion is won.” Her tone contradicted the victory.

“How do you feel?”

Kyra’s demeanor changed then, as she appeared to finally relax, but tension was merely replaced with sorrow. Kassandra didn’t know which was worse.

“I used to feel vengeful. Now… empty.” she paused for a moment, trying to gather her emotions. “All my life, this is all I’ve known. It has been my only cause, my only purpose. And soon, it will be gone.”

“You should be glad. You fulfilled that purpose, but now you have a new one.”

Kyra frowned, curious, as she looked up at her. “And what is that?”
“...Why did you start this rebellion, Kyra?”

“Freedom. Peace.”

“Podarkes and Athens were the ones standing in the way of that, and you have crushed them. Now... You give it to these islands. Not just to the people, but to yourself. You deserve that.”

With a deep breath, Kyra seemed to accept that. “...You’re right. Thank you.”

Kassandra nodded. Kyra began to look at her inquisitively before she asked her. “What about you?”

“What about me?”

“What is your cause?”

Kassandra thought for a moment.

“I’m looking for my mother,” she said, matter-of-factly.

“Your mother? How did you lose her?”

Thoughts of that night were sparked then, of her mother’s cries, and she felt a pit in her stomach. She had spoken with many about her mother in her search to find her, and in those times it had not evoked such grief. But with Kyra, it wasn’t business, nor were they acting off of ulterior motives. It was personal, vulnerable - Kyra had a way of intensifying everything she felt. She began to understand why she spoke little of Podarkes.

“We were separated when I was young,” she said, her voice quieting as she lingered on the memory. “I thought she was dead... Until recently.”

Kyra sensed that she was being vague for a reason, so she left it at that.

“You’ll find her.” she spoke confidently, with a comforting reassurance, and Kassandra could see that she truly believed it.

“You think so?”

“I know.”

She raised her eyebrows. “How?”

“Because I know you. I know what you’re like. You always finish what you start.”

With the way Kyra sat there, oblivious to the weight of what she said, Kassandra didn’t know how to respond. To every other woman she had been with she had been a stranger. But Kyra knew her, and there was something about that that was so much more intimate, more frightening, than the night they had spent with no space between them. She almost wanted her to be wrong.

“Do you know me?” she asked, skeptical.

Kyra merely shrugged.

“You tell me,” she said, rising from the bench calmly, her hands clasped in front of her. “Is there a part of you you haven’t shown me? Have I seen all of you?”
There was something about her voice that was dangerous. Something in her eyes that made her shiver. She swallowed.

“You’ve seen more than most people who know me.”

In the way that Kyra moved, in the way she spoke, it was as if another dagger had been thrown past her eyes again. She had fallen for her the moment she saw her, and Kyra knew that. She knew just what that tone, that glare did to her.

Kyra slowly stepped towards her as she spoke. “Does that…” There was a break in her words as her eyes darkened, fixed on her lips. “…Scare you?”

Gods, if looks could kill, she would be halfway across the River Styx by now. Instinctively, she backed up as Kyra approached - but with only two steps she felt the cave wall on her back.

She finally mustered a lie as her last line of defense.

“No.”

Kyra’s eyes darted back to hers, and when she whispered, she felt the breath from her lips on her own.

“You’re lying.”

She broke.

“It’s terrifying,” she murmured, so quiet it could only be heard by the woman inches from her lips.

“Do you trust me?” Kyra asked, placing her hands on her chest.

“I do.”

Kyra’s eyes moved back down again. There was a growing hunger in her breathing, becoming shaky and rapid as her fingers curled to grasp the red fabric on Kassandra’s chest.

“Kyra…” she whispered.

But Kyra wasn’t listening. She inhaled sharply, and tugged on the fabric to take her - but Kassandra took hold of her by the waist and sharply spun her around so she was pressed against the wall, evoking a gasp.

There was a moment when Kyra resisted, pushing against her chest - but her hands, white knuckles still holding on tightly, told Kassandra to stay, to wait for her. Kyra seemed to be at her last line too, as she tried to slow her breathing. It was as if she was giving herself one last chance to back out, but she was in too deep - both of them were. And they both knew it.

Kyra closed her eyes briefly as she took a deep breath. When she opened them, there was a shift. The gaze that Kassandra had tried to resist for so long finally captured her. Even as the one pinned against the wall, Kyra became the one who held the upper hand. And Kassandra would not dare fight it.

- 

It was not until some time later that words were spoken. Kyra sat on the bench with her head rested back on the wall, her breathing only just beginning to slow. Kassandra knelt between her legs, which still continued to tremble ever so slightly, holding her with hands splayed at the small
of her back. She felt the nails dug into her back and the base of her neck finally ease, and she raised her head up from her sex to place a kiss on her stomach.

“I want you.” she murmured longingly, her lips against her skin, feeling her shiver.

Her touch there made Kyra lift her head from where it rested against the wall. She opened her eyes, placed her hands on Kassandra’s head, threading her fingers into her hair.

“You already have me,” she said, her breathing still heavy.

“No.” She began to part from her. “I don’t.”

“You do-“

Kassandra cut her off. “Don’t lie to me.” She looked at her with a glimmer in her eyes, almost pleading, as if she could change the truth.

Cupping her face, Kyra pulled her up to look at her. “Don’t-“ she began firmly, but she couldn’t stop her voice from breaking. She rested her forehead on hers, squeezing her eyes shut to stop herself from crumbling. Her tone wavered into a whisper. “Don’t make this harder than it has to be.”

Kassandra faltered. She caught Kyra’s hands, taking them in her own as she looked down at them.

“I’m scared of losing you, Kyra.”

“You won’t,” she whispered. But the strength in her voice was slipping, and Kassandra could hear it.

“My heart belongs to you,” Kyra said with a squeeze of her hands. “No matter what happens.”

Kassandra found she couldn’t meet her eyes, and she couldn’t speak either. Instead, she lay down her head on her chest to be the one held - though for only a moment, for as long as she thought she deserved. In that moment, as Kyra cradled her head, she felt the pounding of her heart against her ear. She hoped that one day it truly would be hers, and it would continue to beat just the same - for if it broke in her hands, she would never be able to forgive herself.

Chapter End Notes

So I know there's been a lot of flashbacks so far, but I promise there shouldn't be too many for now on. Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed the chapter!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!