

## (THiaD) Epilogue of a Waterfall

*This loveletter contains themes of despair, self-loathing, isolation, grief, melancholy, poetry, and hope. Reader discretion is advised.*

I am Fossfyr River-Wise, river-kind, though....no kind river I; nor, truth be told, all that wise.

It is my nature to seek waters greater than my own, a swallowing-whole, a subsumption. This grasping rush, this heedless and pouring flood, has burst me recklessly from my ancient banks to leave me vulnerable and captured, a mirror to how my desire once sought to claim and flood another. The punishment fits the crime. I stepped into the cage, repentantly willing, remorsefully penitent. But it is still, after all these ages, a cage.

From it I watch the endless cycle of a cart winding around the lengthening, broadening path, increasingly familiar faces atop it. The hills hollow and the towns swell. Seasons change and dance around each other. And through it all I sit here, spring flood giving way to autumn soak, to winter ice, to thick and unbreakable permafrost. The river shrivels to feed my glacial containment. My bed runs dry, a mere trickle from an unending wellspring that will not let me wither entirely. My cage, now a tomb of my own nature. My heart, forever a broken lump in my throat.

I have done this to myself. Better that, than to have done it to another.

I am not sure that what my heart wanted is forgivable, or that it even should be.

There is change on the wind, a new scent; the largest storm I have witnessed since the very first, thrashing and hungry and violent, plaintive, furious. Salt-sour. Lightning-fresh. Even here, afloat far from that shore (touching but not, close but not, reaching but not) it shakes this cage of a home, a rocking buoy, an uncertainly shrugged shoulder. Here and below my waters slosh, hackling. The tea in my cup mimics it.

My heart, once-torn and yet-bleeding, skips like a smooth-worn river-stone. I am ancient, older than bones and heartbeats and mouths. Older than temperance or morality. I have watched the world rise and ebb countless times. There is little surprise left; only so many permutations exist, when we follow our natures above all else, time and again. Very little surprise at all. But there is, always, *hope*.

Fitting, that this hope for change rides the wrath of a Gale.

I force space onto the landing outside my front door and peer through the wall - the skin - of ice that contains and protects me. Below is the withered corpse of my bed, overgrown and

overtaken as the world has moved on around us in its constant change. I have now spent more time away from it than with it. Untended by any hand it rots as I rot, equally as unable to disappear completely. My neglect shames me: how could I willingly quash this part of myself so ruthlessly? My taboo I own, freely so, but is there not also a crime in so fully denying one's own nature? Is it not cowardice to accept the boot of another at your neck as just, and let that pressure stand for accountability? I have told myself that I am paying penance. I have cultivated despair, and festered resentment, and painted it as the price. But what have I truly *paid*? Have I improved myself? Is there a lesson here I have learned? Am I repenting, or am I worshipping the boot as an excuse for my own passivity?

The windows rattle violently, and my thoughts with them. Outside the jagged barrier of ice, a Gale of primordial proportions indeed. A flood of wind; a current of pressure. It howls, distorted, a melody I have come to know better than the banks of my own river's bed.

And I understand now.

Somehow my strange little bird has sent a message back to me, without ever coming home to roost. I've never been more proud.

To me the wind was so unfathomable, unknowable. I am not the sea; I am not even a lake. I am a river, bound by my banks. To spill out is destruction, or wrath, or dissolution. Necessary, yes, but not permanent. Not sustainable. I can understand a downpour. The desire of one droplet to find a greater pool - that I know, and well. It is all of me. My strength, and my weakness; my Summer, and my Winter. The flood balanced against the relief of a confining course.

*Now* I truly understand what my crime was: not the taboo of seeking to constrain another, but the arrogance of believing I *could*, of believing myself not only equal but superior to that which I desired. I believed myself the banks; I forgot I was the water. But I am Fossfyr River-Wise. Life-bringer. Flood-wrecker. *The* river, older than bones and heartbeats and mouths, the first source of the vast sea. The original poetry. And I am unchainable. The only one who can keep me here is *me*.

I crack the ice, and I leap.