

apsidial precession

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by [glassedplanets](#)

Summary

"There's a new player over on the Shore. He calls himself 'Crow.' As if trying to rub our prince's death in our faces." —Report from Paladin Hallam Fen.

Notes

spoilers for forsaken!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

// apocererion

A Ghost floats serenely through hallowed halls, either uncaring or ignorant of the majesty and sorrow held in the silence of this place.

Her shell twitches. A spark. It's closer. Her movement is more measured, now. There is no attention spared to the analysis of what this place is or what meaning it holds. No care for its purpose. Only for one thing: her charge.

A feeling like relief courses through her circuits. She is a simple thing; she does not join the ranks of Ghosts serving under a spymaster, nor does she travel in packs of chargeless lights, waiting to kill the loneliness. No need for that, in her opinion. Only this: the search for her partner. And now it is over.

Her shell expands as the Light fills this dim room, washing over the body. It's strangely laid, beneath a layer of amethyst so finely cut as to be translucent, glittering with variations in its mineral composition. No matter. The Light pays no attention to flimsy barriers.

(If she'd thought to pay attention — maybe she should have — she would have noticed the Light rushing into this body with both strange desperation and a foreboding reluctance. But she does not pay attention, because she is full of Light and so is her partner and she has never felt joy like this.)

Her charge gasps and sits up and immediately hits the barrier and cracks it and flinches back and she whispers, soothing, "Shhh — shh, it's alright. You'll have to break it to get out, but it's okay. I'll help you when you get hurt. Always."

"What are you," her charge asks her from behind the amethyst, eyes wide in shock and awe, and she resynthesizes and adjusts the vibrations of air so as to hear clearly. A lovely voice. Her partner's voice. She is a simple thing: she loves it. "What is this? Where am I?"

"I can give you coordinates, but I doubt they'll make sense to you right now. Let's get you out of here first."

With amethyst shards clinging to folds of fabric, pressing against skin, her charge looks around the room they occupy. They are the only ones here, she knows. The only ones for miles. A strange desolation. Gravity weighs on her charge, and she watches, helpless but understanding, as grief wracks through this small, fragile, undying body full of Light, and her charge weeps without understanding why.

// saturnalia fossa i

They walk. They talk.

Two things are determined, eventually: *he* is an okay word to use for reference, and Crow seems like a fitting name. He'd looked at the abstract birdlike striations in the geode walls of that strange chamber for a long time after she'd explained that he is a Guardian, now, and she his Ghost. He asks what to call her. She says that he's welcome to pick something suiting. She doesn't mind. After some time, he settles on Naomi. It seems like a nice name. She agrees.

Naomi fills him in on Guardian history in wide, gentle strokes. The arrival of the Traveler, the Golden Age, the Collapse, the rise of the Last City, their triumphs since. She lets Crow question the blanks himself, and it becomes a welcome game for them: Crow asks, she answers, and they both laugh when she doesn't know. They have walked for days and for miles, and now they know they are not the only life around. Ships fly overhead, occasionally, drawing fleeting shadows across this strange landscape. They have not needed to defend themselves yet, but they know the day will come. Crow had been raised wearing strangely sturdy clothing, almost armor-like, which he and Naomi have reinforced scavenging what they can.

It's not so lonely anymore.

// saturnalia fossa ii

Crow dies hours after he is raised. It happens after Naomi tells him she'll resurrect him, no matter what state he's in. This is the Gift of Light.

Crow gets a strange, troubled look on his face. It is the first time he feels the uneasy and formless presence of a life before his death. He flings himself into a deep canyon, body colliding with sharp-spire rock and his spine shatters immediately with swift pain like fire. The next thing he knows, Naomi's Light washes over him.

"Why did you do that?" she asks, curious but without judgement.

"I don't know," he answers honestly. "I don't think I like secrets very much. Death seems like such a big one."

// saturnalia fossa iii

Transcript. Speaker identities unconfirmed. Reef airspace. Coordinates unknown.

SPEAKER-01: The body is gone.

SPEAKER-02: For your sake, I'm going to pretend I misheard you. *What?*

SPEAKER-01: No mistake. I wish it was. The body is gone.

SPEAKER-02: But *how*? There's no way the Fallen or the Scorn or [*signal weak; indistinct*] possibly have gotten their way in there. And what few Lightbearers know where that place is, they know not to touch it.

SPEAKER-01: [*indistinct*]

SPEAKER-02: I knew we should have had better surveillance. That's on me. [*A pause.*]
What else was stolen?

SPEAKER-01: That's the thing. Nothing else. Just the body.

SPEAKER-02: I don't understand.

SPEAKER-01: Neither do I.

SPEAKER-02: Alright. Tighten surveillance, and— [*signal weak; indistinct*] —what to look for.

SPEAKER-01: What about— [*signal weak; indistinct*]

SPEAKER-02: [*signal weak; indistinct*] —take a look there myself.

// jaunts across cis-jovian kirkwood gaps i

Naomi asks him if he'd like to go to the Tower. It's certainly possible, now that they've worked their way into Fallen territory; there are plenty of ships they could scavenge and polish up, and Crow would be able to learn more, ask more questions, sate more curiosity.

Crow shakes his head with a slight frown, and his eyes are distant. There is something that calls to him here, something about the starlight and the vastness of this place that makes the blood race in his veins, just a pace faster. Maybe someday he'll visit the Tower, but only once he's exhausted every crevice these shackled asteroids have to offer. There are so many places to explore.

(There is still this pull, this thread, to unravel. Sometimes, when the starlight fades to deepest lavender, he thinks he can call it guilt. But he does not know why or how or what he has done.)

Naomi teases him about it sometimes, calling him Curious Crow. Crow swats gently at her when she does this, and says that he just wants to know things. That's all there is to it. A secret's not a secret if he knows it.

// jaunts across cis-jovian kirkwood gaps ii

“He’s back,” says Petra Venj. “I thought you should know. Well— thought I should tell you, at least. Raised. A Lightbearer.”

It feels like a confession.

“Yes,” Mara Sov replies, voice echoing through the Oracle, soft in its own way. “Corrupted by the Light as he was by the Dark. Still walking the line, as he always has done. As we all do.”

“He doesn’t ask after you,” Petra tells her. “He chases secrets in a different way. For the satisfaction of knowledge. It’s strange, but I can’t say it’s unwelcome.”

Petra feels, deep within her, that Mara Sov smiles.

“A sister with secrets,” Mara says. “A brother who hunts and explores. A woman who is plain and fierce. All is as it always has been and always will be, Petra Venj.”

Petra does not, cannot understand this answer. She thanks her Queen and bids her farewell.

She returns to her post, and eventually she is greeted by Guardians who come to clean the City by rite of slaughter. But not him. Never him. She doesn’t allow herself his presence. Reparations, she tells herself; acceptance and retribution and rebirth and everything the Awoken have known before will come to him on their own, without her interference. Perhaps Guardianhood will suit him.

Later, a spark like a flickermoth catches her eye and she turns, but there is nothing there, save a hissing rift into the Ascendant Plane that shadows the Dreaming City. She blinks, and she thinks she sees a spark flare for just a second, once more. She ignores it and returns to her work.

Imagine three great nations under three great queens, whispers a voice, when the sky is deep and lavender and the stars flare bright through stardust. The first queen puts her people first and rules alongside them and protects them with all her teeth and claws. The second queen drinks nothing but the blood of slaughter until she is swollen with it and her sword is sharper than the point upon which our universe broke open. The third queen keeps secrets like a brood of eggs and they hatch into a primordial explosion sharper than a swordstrike.

The future belongs to one of these queens.

Petra ignores the whispers like she ignores everything else. She can’t afford to dwell on riddles. There is work to be done and people to defend and she does not have the energy to dwell on secrets and curiosities. Those are things best left for others.

// jaunts across cis-jovian kirkwood gaps iii

It's clear that Petra believed, genuinely, that she was doing him a kindness. That's what makes the cruelty cut even deeper. In the end, though, he salts the wound himself. He goes willingly.

Every single Awoken left has to bear this burden of knowledge now. Most are doing so through avoidance. Petra made an open offer: any Awoken who wants to speak with the Guardian named Crow is free to do so, as long as the past is not discussed. It goes unspoken that Guardians seldom care about their lives before, and they've seen this themselves. It goes unspoken, the dangers of revealing his past. It goes unspoken, the guilt of a people (of a person) who failed someone so thoroughly.

He cannot bring himself to agree. Not entirely. But unlike the others, he wants to pay the price himself, with his sweat and blood and the wrenching beats of his heart, rather than dance around the fact and swaddle it in secrets. He wants to learn to hate Crow, to feel the terrible cosmic bitter irony in knowing that the person who hated Guardians the most was raised as one without any awareness of anything he had ever been.

And so here he finds himself walking patrol with Crow for the tenth time in as many days, moving across Thieves' Landing with the familiar, grounding weight of the Supremacy between his shoulders.

"It's your home if you'd like to claim it as such," he answers Crow, pulling himself out of his thoughts. "That's what we've been telling all Awoken Guardians, lately. Those interested enough to ask, at least."

"I think," Crow replies, "that it's hard to think of anywhere as home. But it doesn't hurt to try."

"That's wise."

He knows it's stiff, and Crow shoots him an odd look behind the tilt of his helmet (and oh, it's a relief, it's such a relief that Crow wears a helmet, because seeing those eyes has shattered him every time so far) but he hums anyways.

"Thank you for doing this, Till," Crow says, cheerful yet solemn somehow. Genuine. "I know the Awoken don't like Guardians. That's what they all say, anyways. But I like learning about the Dreaming City." He shrugs. His Ghost bobs and blinks. "I like taking walks with you."

The man calling himself Till smiles back at Crow, and he knows it is a terrible and broken thing he wears on his face.

// wispy terrain on rhea(not-silvia) i

Jolyon Till the Rachis falls in love with the same man twice.

It is the worst pain he has ever felt, worse than the wrench of atoms in his core when he felt his Queen's death echo across the system.

It is the giddiest elation he has ever felt, more intense than the first time he opened his eyes and felt starlight bathe his skin.

// wispy terrain on rhea(not-silvia) ii

They are lying side by side in a sniper's nest. They have been here for nearly a full synodic day, and Crow ditched his helmet hours ago to feel the starlight pour against his skin. It is a small space. Crow is careful to not jostle Till's arms as he takes aim, but Till's leg rests against his, greaves sliding together as they shift and breathe.

As it turns out, Crow is an excellent spotter, and Till said once that he's gone some time without one. And so they've been doing this for ages now, clearing out remnants of Scorn and Fallen and Cabal and Hive on the Tangled Shore, and Crow finds, after some time, that the days or weeks or months where Till is called back by the Wrath to do other work are not entirely bearable.

The other Awoken still avoid him. They're wary of all Guardians, but they seem especially reluctant to have anything to do with him. Except Till. Till, the grand exception. Till, a near-constant companion now. Till, and his smiles, and his strange straight-laced sensibility. Till, his first friend after Naomi.

Scorn shift like ants below them, and Crow focuses his attention. The time is coming.

An hour later, he calls the shot. Till takes it. His finger curls, his breath stills, and the rifle beats back against his shoulder with an almighty crack. Crow has long stopped checking to see that it's a bullseye. There's no need. Till does not miss.

A bizarre urge overcomes Crow, and his body moves without his command. He snatches the spent cartridge out of the air as it's ejected, quick and fluid and precise, and he feels the heated metal even through the palm of his glove, bright-hot against his bare fingertips.

He grins at Till, brandishing the cartridge between his thumb and forefinger with a flourish, expecting the kind of good-natured eyeroll he usually gets for the strange and brash things he does. Instead, Till stares up at him, eyes wide, and something in his face is raw and open like Crow has seldom seen.

Before he can process the movement, Till pushes himself up, closes a hand around Crow's outstretched fingers, and kisses him. It is soft, and he does not linger, but rather returns immediately to the rifle as if expecting retaliation.

The cartridge burns against his fingers. Till's fingers burn hotter.

Crow's world shifts.

The amorphous press of a haunting *before* breaks like the swell of seawater against a cliff.

"Your name," Crow whispers, hoarse, trembling with realization, "is Jolyon Till the Rachis."

// wispy terrain on rhea(not-silvia) iii

"My name is Jolyon Till the Rachis," he says, much later, mouth brushing against skin as he speaks, hands charting long, stroking paths across points he'd mapped millennia ago. "Call me Till, or Jolyon, or whatever you like."

"Jol," Crow breathes, eyes slipping shut, the sharp bow of his lips parting in pleasure at the sensation of touch, and the knife in Jolyon's gut twists even as sparks dance across his skin where fingers brush across it. Pain and elation. Jolyon has stopped being able to separate them. "You knew me before."

Jolyon Till the Rachis, famous among Crows, sniper, scout, teller of tales, and enemy of secrets, says, "I loved you before."

// peripalladion

"What do you remember?"

"You. *Her*. Petra. Starlight and shadows and dead things I hated and envied. Fallen Kings. But it's vague. I can't hold all of the shapes all at once. And I don't remember anything at the end except darkness."

"Okay."

"'Okay?' That's it?"

"If you ask, I won't keep secrets from you. If you want to know, ask. If not, then don't."

"Jol—"

Hesitation, like a bottomless chasm.

"—why me?"

"Before, or now?"

“The answers are different?”

“Yes.”

“Tell me both, then.”

Between slow, bright kisses, Jolyon Till the Rachis answers thusly: because of terrible ideas and the burn of adrenaline and the satisfaction of a good shot and being a grounding wire and feeling lightning race through him. Because of questions and curiosity and simplicity and freedom from everything that was and an identity separate from the past and the same terrible ideas.

With long, lingering touches, Crow the Guardian answers in turn: because of intelligent eyes and the handsome intimidating line of rifle to shoulder and the wall that he built up and broke down and the easiness that grew in its place.

And hesitantly, Crow the Guardian, once Uldren Sov, Queensbrother, answers again: because you hated secrets and that’s all I made myself into and you loved me anyways.

// xxiii — i think joy and sorrow will be the same thing soon. like love and death.

End Notes

i've never written and posted something all in one day but i guess this is what happens when some niche bullshit shows up in lore cards and it turns out that bungo was out for fucking blood as far as pinging all the garbage i'm into. big shoutout to a friend of mine who came up with this as a concept, because clearly it has utterly haunted me. i fucking loved writing artsy pretentious vague shit. i should do this more often. also, sorry to anyone who actually knows astrophysics because i try my best but wow there's only so much i can learn on the fly

(end quote: [fire without fuel](#))

edit: bungie i have some questions for you. what the fuck

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