

Twenty years had passed since the Great Sacrifice at the Nexus of Five Cities. The Shadow That Devours lay sealed once more, but the price of victory had shattered the old world forever. The Confederation of Free Cities now stood where once the mighty Empire of Valdros had reigned supreme.

Katherine Alexios, now bearing the title of High Councilor rather than Empress, stood in the rebuilt halls of Thalarion. The great palace had been transformed into the Hall of Memory, where the deeds of the fallen heroes were carved in living marble that seemed to pulse with inner light. At its center stood twin statues of Andrew and Rachel, their hands forever entwined, their love transcending death itself.



"Aunt Katherine," came a voice from behind her. She turned to see Marcus Flowerton the Younger, Rachel's nephew, now a man of thirty-five with his aunt's emerald eyes and gentle smile. As the current Master of Archives, he tended to the great library that had grown from Florence's research.

"The northern delegation has arrived," Marcus reported. " Susan Hugh leads them, and she brings... unusual news." Katherine's expression grew curious.

Susan Hugh had become the undisputed leader of Storm Watch after the deaths of her brothers, transforming from spymaster to stateswoman with remarkable grace. If she brought unusual news, it would be worth hearing.

In the council chambers that evening, Susan Hugh stood before the assembled representatives of the five cities. Her silver-blonde hair, now streaked with pure white, was braided with runes of leadership. Her pale green eyes held secrets as always, but also something else—hope.

*"Friends of the Confederation,"
Susan began, her voice
carrying the authority of one who had helped save the world,
"I bring word from the far northern reaches, beyond even
Storm Watch's traditional borders.
Our scouts have discovered something extraordinary."*

She gestured to a young woman who stepped forward—tall, with striking features that seemed somehow familiar. Her hair was the color of spun moonlight, and her eyes were a vivid violet that seemed to glow with inner fire.



"This is Lyanna Stormborn," Susan announced, and a gasp went through the chamber.

"She claims to be the daughter of Andrew Alexios and Rachel Flowerton."

The council erupted in amazement. Katherine rose slowly, her hands trembling. "That's impossible.

They died at the Nexus. There was no child."

Lyanna stepped forward, her bearing noble and confident. "With respect, High Councilor, I am living proof that love truly exists." She raised her hand, and suddenly the air shimmered. Images appeared—memories made manifest—showing Andrew and Rachel in their final moments, their love so pure and powerful that it created new life even as their mortal forms faded.