

NINETEEN

CAPTIVITY

The bears took Lyra up a gully in the cliffs, where the fog lay even more thickly than on the shore. The cries of the cliff-ghasts and the crash of the waves grew fainter as they climbed, and presently the only sound was the ceaseless crying of seabirds. They clambered in silence over rocks and snowdrifts, and although Lyra peered wide-eyed into the enfolding grayness, and strained her ears for the sound of her friends, she might have been the only human on Svalbard; and lorek might have been dead.

The bear sergeant said nothing to her until they were on level ground. There they stopped. From the sound of the waves, Lyra judged them to have reached the top of the cliffs, and she dared not run away in case she fell over the edge.

"Look up," said the bear, as a waft of breeze moved aside the heavy curtain of the fog. There was little daylight in any case, but Lyra did look, and found herself standing in front of a vast building of stone.

It was as tall at least as the highest part of Jordan College, but much more massive, and carved all over with representations of warfare, showing bears victorious and Skraelings surrendering, showing Tartars chained and slaving in the fire mines, showing zeppelins flying from all parts of the world bearing gifts and tributes to the king of the bears, Iofur Raknison.

At least, that was what the bear sergeant told her the carvings showed. She had to take his word for it, because every projection and ledge on the deeply sculpted facade was occupied by gannets and skuas, which cawed and shrieked and wheeled constantly around overhead, and whose droppings had coated every part of the building with thick smears of dirty white.

The bears seemed not to see the mess, however, and they led the way in through the huge arch, over the icy ground that was filthy with the spatter of the birds. There was a courtyard, and high steps, and gateways, and at every point bears in armor challenged the incomers and were given a password. Their armor was polished and gleaming, and they all wore plumes in their helmets. Lyra

couldn't help comparing every bear she saw with lorek Byrnison, and always to his advantage; he was more powerful, more graceful, and his armor was real armor, rust-colored, bloodstained, dented with combat, not elegant, enameled, and decorative like most of what she saw around her now.

As they went further in, the temperature rose, and so did something else. The smell in lofur's palace was repulsive: rancid seal fat, dung, blood, refuse of every sort. Lyra pushed back her hood to be cooler, but she couldn't help wrinkling her nose. She hoped bears couldn't read human expressions. There were iron brackets every few yards, holding blubber lamps, and in their flaring shadows it wasn't always easy to see where she was treading, either.

Finally they stopped outside a heavy door of iron. A guard bear pulled back a massive bolt, and the sergeant suddenly swung his paw at Lyra, knocking her head over heels through the doorway. Before she could scramble up, she heard the door being bolted behind her.

It was profoundly dark, but Pantalaimon became a firefly, and shed a tiny glow around them. They

were in a narrow cell where the walls dripped with damp, and there was one stone bench for furniture. In the farthest corner there was a heap of rags she took for bedding, and that was all she could see.

Lyra sat down, with Pantalaimon on her shoulder, and felt in her clothes for the alethiometer.

"It's certainly had a lot of banging about, Pan," she whispered. "I hope it still works."

Pantalaimon flew down to her wrist, and sat there glowing while Lyra composed her mind. With a part of her, she found it remarkable that she could sit here in terrible danger and yet sink into the calm she needed to read the alethiometer; and yet it was so much a part of her now that the most complicated questions sorted themselves out into their constituent symbols as naturally as her muscles moved her limbs: she hardly had to think about them.

She turned the hands and thought the question: "Where is Iorek?"

The answer came at once: "A day's journey away, carried there by the balloon after your crash; but hurrying this way."

"And Roger?"

"With Iorek."

"What will Iorek do?"

"He intends to break into the palace and rescue you, in the face of all the difficulties."

She put the alethiometer away, even more anxious than before.

"They won't let him, will they?" she said to Pantalaimon. "There's too many of 'em. I wish I was a witch, Pan, then you could go off and find him and take messages and all, and we could make a proper plan...."

Then she had the fright of her life.

A man's voice spoke in the darkness a few feet away, and said, "Who are you?"

She leaped up with a cry of alarm. Pantalaimon became a bat at once, shrieking, and flew around her head as she backed against the wall.

"Eh? Eh?" said the man again. "Who is that? Speak up! Speak up!"

"Be a firefly again, Pan," she said shakily. "But don't go too close."

The little wavering point of light danced through the air and fluttered around the head of the speaker. And it hadn't been a heap of rags after all; it was a gray-bearded man, chained to the wall, whose eyes glittered in Pantalaimon's luminance, and whose tattered hair hung over his shoulders. His daemon, a weary-looking serpent, lay in his lap, flicking out her tongue occasionally as Pantalaimon flew near.

"What's your name?" she said.

"Jotham Santelia," he replied. "I am the Regius Professor of Cosmology at the University of Gloucester. Who are you?"

"Lyra Belacqua. What have they locked you up for?"

"Malice and jealousy...Where do you come from? Eh?"

"From Jordan College," she said. "What? Oxford?"

"Yes."

"Is that scoundrel Trelawney still there? Eh?"

"The Palmerian Professor? Yes," she said.

"Is he, by God! Eh? They should have forced his resignation long ago. Duplicitous plagiarist! Coxcomb!"

Lyra made a neutral sound.

"Has he published his paper on gamma-ray photons yet?" the Professor said, thrusting his face up toward Lyra's.

She moved back.

"I don't know," she said, and then, making it up out of pure habit, "no," she went on. "I remember now. He said he still needed to check some figures. And...He said he was going to write about Dust as well. That's it."

"Scoundrel! Thief! Blackguard! Rogue!" shouted the old man, and he shook so violently that Lyra was afraid he'd have a fit. His daemon slithered lethargically off his lap as the Professor beat his fists against his shanks. Drops of saliva flew out of his mouth.

"Yeah," said Lyra, "I always thought he was a thief. And a rogue and all that."

If it was unlikely for a scruffy little girl to turn up in his cell knowing the very man who figured in his obsessions, the Regius Professor didn't notice. He was mad, and no wonder, poor old man; but he might have some scraps of information that Lyra could use. She sat carefully near him, not near enough for him to touch, but near enough for Pantalaimon's tiny light to show him clearly.

"One thing Professor Trelawney used to boast about," she said, "was how well he knew the king of the bears—"

"Boast! Eh? Eh? I should say he boasts! He's nothing but a popinjay! And a pirate! Not a scrap of original research to his name! Everything filched from better men!"

"Yeah, that's right," said Lyra earnestly. "And when he does do something of his own, he gets it wrong."

"Yes! Yes! Absolutely! No talent, no imagination, a fraud from top to bottom!"

"I mean, for example," said Lyra, "I bet you know more about the bears than he does, for a start."

"Bears," said the old man, "ha! I could write a treatise on them! That's why they shut me away, you know."

"Why's that?"

"I know too much about them, and they daren't kill me. They daren't do it, much as they'd like to. I know, you see. I have friends. Yes! Powerful friends."

"Yeah," said Lyra. "And I bet you'd be a wonderful teacher," she went on. "Being as you got so much knowledge and experience."

Even in the depths of his madness a little common sense still flickered, and he looked at her sharply, almost as if he suspected her of sarcasm. But she had been dealing with suspicious and cranky Scholars all her life, and she gazed back with such bland admiration that he was soothed.

"Teacher," he said, "teacher...Yes, I could teach. Give me the right pupil, and I will light a fire in his mind!"

"Because your knowledge ought not to just vanish," Lyra said encouragingly. "It ought to be passed on so people remember you."

"Yes," he said, nodding seriously. "That's very perceptive of you, child. What is your name?"

"Lyra," she told him again. "Could you teach me about the bears?"

"The bears..." he said doubtfully.

"I'd really like to know about cosmology and Dust and all, but I'm not clever enough for that. You need really clever students for that. But I could learn about the bears. You could teach me about them all right. And we could sort of practice on that and work up to Dust, maybe."

He nodded again.

"Yes," he said, "yes, I believe you're right. There is a correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm! The stars are alive, child. Did you know that? Everything out there is alive, and there are grand purposes abroad! The universe is full of intentions, you know. Everything happens for a purpose. Your purpose is to remind me of that.

Good, good—in my despair I had forgotten. Good! Excellent, my child!”

“So, have you seen the king? Iofur Raknison?”

“Yes. Oh, yes. I came here at his invitation, you know. He intended to set up a university. He was going to make me Vice-Chancellor. That would be one in the eye for the Royal Arctic Institute, eh! Eh? And that scoundrel Trelawney! Ha!”

“What happened?”

“I was betrayed by lesser men. Trelawney among them, of course. He was here, you know. On Svalbard. Spread lies and calumny about my qualifications. Calumny! Slander! Who was it discovered the final proof of the Barnard-Stokes hypothesis, eh? Eh? Yes, Santelia, that's who. Trelawney couldn't take it. Lied through his teeth. Iofur Raknison had me thrown in here. I'll be out one day, you'll see. I'll be Vice-Chancellor, oh yes. Let Trelawney come to me then begging for mercy! Let the Publications Committee of the Royal Arctic Institute spurn my contributions then! Ha! I'll expose them all! ”

"I expect lorek Byrnison will believe you, when he comes back," Lyra said.

"lorek Byrnison? No good waiting for that. He'll never come back."

"He's on his way now."

"Then they'll kill him. He's not a bear, you see. He's an outcast. Like me. Degraded, you see. Not entitled to any of the privileges of a bear."

"Supposing lorek Byrnison did come back, though," Lyra said. "Supposing he challenged lofur Raknison to a fight..."

"Oh, they wouldn't allow it," said the Professor decisively, "lofur would never lower himself to acknowledge lorek Byrnison's right to fight him. Hasn't got a right. lorek might as well be a seal now, or a walrus, not a bear. Or worse: Tartar or Skraeling. They wouldn't fight him honorably like a bear; they'd kill him with fire hurlers before he got near. Not a hope. No mercy."

"Oh," said Lyra, with a heavy despair in her breast.

"And what about the bears' other prisoners? Do you know where they keep them?"

"Other prisoners?"

"Like.-.Lord Asriel."

Suddenly the Professor's manner changed altogether. He cringed and shrank back against the wall, and shook his head warningly.

"Shh! Quiet! They'll hear you!" he whispered.

"Why mustn't we mention Lord Asriel?"

"Forbidden! Very dangerous! Iofur Raknison will not allow him to be mentioned!"

"Why?" Lyra said, coming closer and whispering herself so as not to alarm him.

"Keeping Lord Asriel prisoner is a special charge laid on Iofur by the Oblation Board,"

the old man whispered back. "Mrs. Coulter herself came here to see Iofur and offered him all kinds of rewards to keep Lord Asriel out of the way. I know about it, you see, because at the time I was in Iofur's favor myself. I met Mrs. Coulter! Yes. Had a long conversation with her. Iofur was besotted with her. Couldn't stop talking about her.

Would do anything for her. If she wants Lord Asriel kept a hundred miles away, that's what will happen.

Anything for Mrs. Coulter, anything. He's going to name his capital city after her, did you know that?"

"So he wouldn't let anyone go and see Lord Asriel?"

"No! Never! But he's afraid of Lord Asriel too, you know, Iofur's playing a difficult game. But he's clever. He's done what they both want. He's kept Lord Asriel isolated, to please Mrs. Coulter; and he's let Lord Asriel have all the equipment he wants, to please him. Can't last, this equilibrium. Unstable. Pleasing both sides. Eh? The wave function of this situation is going to collapse quite soon. I have it on good authority."

"Really?" said Lyra, her mind elsewhere, furiously thinking about what he'd just said.

"Yes. My daemon's tongue can taste probability, you know."

"Yeah. Mine too. When do they feed us, Professor?"

"Feed us?"

"They must put some food in sometime, else we'd starve. And there's bones on the floor. I expect they're seal bones, aren't they?"

"Seal...I don't know. It might be."

Lyra got up and felt her way to the door. There was no handle, naturally, and no keyhole, and it fitted so closely at top and bottom that no light showed. She pressed her ear to it, but heard nothing.

Behind her the old man was muttering to himself. She heard his chain rattle as he turned over wearily and lay the other way, and presently he began to snore. She felt her way back to the bench.

Pantalaimon, tired of putting out light, had become a bat, which was all very well for him; he fluttered around squeaking quietly while Lyra sat and chewed a fingernail.

Quite suddenly, with no warning at all, she remembered what it was that she'd heard the Palmerian Professor saying in the Retiring Room all that time ago. Something had been nagging at her ever since Iorek Byrnison had first mentioned Iofur's name, and now it came back: what Iofur Raknison wanted more than anything else, Professor Trelawney had said, was a daemon.

Of course, she hadn't understood what he meant; he'd spoken of panserbjorne instead of using the English word, so she didn't know he was talking

about bears, and she had no idea that Iofur Raknison wasn't a man. And a man would have had a daemon anyway, so it hadn't made sense.

But now it was plain. Everything she'd heard about the bear-king added up: the mighty Iofur Raknison wanted nothing more than to be a human being, with a daemon of his own.

And as she thought that, a plan came to her: a way of making Iofur Raknison do what he would normally never have done; a way of restoring Lorek Byrnison to his rightful throne; a way, finally, of getting to the place where they had put Lord Asriel, and taking him the alethiometer.

The idea hovered and shimmered delicately, like a soap bubble, and she dared not even look at it directly in case it burst. But she was familiar with the way of ideas, and she let it shimmer, looking away, thinking about something else.

She was nearly asleep when the bolts clattered and the door opened. Light spilled in, and she was on her feet at once, with Pantalaimon hidden swiftly in her pocket. As soon as the bear guard bent his head to lift the haunch of seal meat and throw it in, she was at his side, saying:

"Take me to Iofur Raknison. You'll be in trouble if you don't. It's very urgent."

He dropped the meat from his jaws and looked up. It wasn't easy to read bears' expressions, but he looked angry.

"It's about Iorek Byrnison," she said quickly. "I know something about him, and the king needs to know."

"Tell me what it is, and I'll pass the message on," said the bear.

"That wouldn't be right, not for someone else to know before the king does," she said.

"I'm sorry, I don't mean to be rude, but you see, it's the rule that the king has to know things first."

Perhaps he was slow-witted. At any rate, he paused, and then threw the meat into the cell before saying, "Very well. You come with me."

He led her out into the open air, for which she was grateful. The fog had lifted and there were stars glittering above the high-walled courtyard. The

guard conferred with another bear, who came to speak to her.

"You cannot see Iofur Raknison when you please," he said. "You have to wait till he wants to see you."

"But this is urgent, what I've got to tell him," she said. "It's about Ilorek Byrnison. I'm sure His Majesty would want to know it, but all the same I can't tell it to anyone else, don't you see? It wouldn't be polite. He'd be ever so cross if he knew we hadn't been polite."

That seemed to carry some weight, or else to mystify the bear sufficiently to make him pause. Lyra was sure her interpretation of things was right: Iofur Raknison was introducing so many new ways that none of the bears was certain yet how to behave, and she could exploit this uncertainty in order to get to Iofur.

So that bear retreated to consult the bear above him, and before long Lyra was ushered inside the palace again, but into the state quarters this time. It was no cleaner here, and in fact the air was even harder to breathe than in the cell, because all the natural stinks had been overlaid by a heavy layer of cloying perfume. She was made to wait in a

corridor, then in an anteroom, then outside a large door, while bears discussed and argued and scurried back and forth, and she had time to look around at the preposterous decoration: the walls were rich with gilt plasterwork, some of which was already peeling off or crumbling with damp, and the florid carpets were trodden with filth.

Finally the large door was opened from the inside. A blaze of light from half a dozen chandeliers, a crimson carpet, and more of that thick perfume hanging in the air; and the faces of a dozen or more bears, all gazing at her, none in armor but each with some kind of decoration: a golden necklace, a headdress of purple feathers, a crimson sash. Curiously, the room was also occupied by birds; terns and skuas perched on the plaster cornice, and swooped low to snatch at bits of fish that had fallen out of one another's nests in the chandeliers.

And on a dais at the far end of the room, a mighty throne reared up high. It was made of granite for strength and massiveness, but like so many other things in Iofur's palace, it was decorated with

overelaborate swags and festoons of gilt that looked like tinsel on a mountainside.

Sitting on the throne was the biggest bear she had ever seen. Iofur Raknison was even taller and bulkier than lorek, and his face was much more mobile and expressive, with a kind of humanness in it which she had never seen in lorek's. When Iofur looked at her, she seemed to see a man looking out of his eyes, the sort of man she had met at Mrs. Coulter's, a subtle politician used to power. He was wearing a heavy gold chain around his neck, with a gaudy jewel hanging from it, and his claws—a good six inches long—were each covered in gold leaf. The effect was one of enormous strength and energy and craft; he was quite big enough to carry the absurd overdecoration; on him it didn't look preposterous, it looked barbaric and magnificent.

She quailed. Suddenly her idea seemed too feeble for words.

But she moved a little closer, because she had to, and then she saw that Iofur was holding something on his knee, as a human might let a cat sit there—or a daemon.

It was a big stuffed doll, a manikin with a vacant stupid human face. It was dressed as Mrs. Coulter would dress, and it had a sort of rough resemblance to her. He was pretending he had a daemon. Then she knew she was safe.

She moved up close to the throne and bowed very low, with Pantalaimon keeping quiet and still in her pocket.

"Our greetings to you, great King," she said quietly. "Or I mean my greetings, not his."

"Not whose?" he said, and his voice was lighter than she had thought it would be, but full of expressive tones and subtleties. When he spoke, he waved a paw in front of his mouth to dislodge the flies that clustered there.

"Irek Byrnison's, Your Majesty," she said. "I've got something very important and secret to tell you, and I think I ought to tell you in private, really."

"Something about Irek Byrnison?"

She came close to him, stepping carefully over the bird-spattered floor, and brushed away the flies buzzing at her face.

"Something about daemons," she said, so that only he could hear. His expression changed. She couldn't read what it was saying, but there was no doubt that he was powerfully interested. Suddenly he lumbered forward off the throne, making her skip aside, and roared an order to the other bears. They all bowed their heads and backed out toward the door. The birds, which had risen in a flurry at his roar, squawked and swooped around overhead before settling again on their nests.

When the throne room was empty but for Iofur Raknison and Lyra, he turned to her eagerly.

"Well?" he said. "Tell me who you are. What is this about daemons?"

"I am a daemon, Your Majesty," she said.

He stopped still.

"Whose?" he said.

"Iorek Byrnison's," was her answer.

It was the most dangerous thing she had ever said. She could see quite clearly that only his astonishment prevented him from killing her at once. She went on:

"Please, Your Majesty, let me tell you all about it first before you harm me. I've come here at my own risk, as you can see, and there's nothing I've got that could hurt you. In fact, I want to help you, that's why I've come. Iorek Byrnison was the first bear to get a daemon, but it should have been you. I would much rather be your daemon than his, that's why I came."

"How?" he said, breathlessly. "How has a bear got a daemon? And why him? And how are you so far from him?" The flies left his mouth like tiny words. "That's easy. I can go far from him because I'm like a witch's daemon. You know how they can go hundreds of miles from their humans? It's like that. And as for how he got me, it was at Bolvangar. You've heard of Bolvangar, because Mrs. Coulter must have told you about it, but she probably didn't tell you everything they were doing there." "Cutting..." he said.

"Yes, cutting, that's part of it, intercision. But they're doing all kinds of other things too, like making artificial daemons. And experimenting on animals. When Iorek Byrnison heard about it, he offered himself for an experiment to see if they

could make a daemon for him, and they did. It was me. My name is Lyra. Just like when people have daemons, they're animal-formed, so when a bear has a daemon, it'll be human. And I'm his daemon. I can see into his mind and know exactly what he's doing and where he is and—" "Where is he now?"

"On Svalbard. He's coming this way as fast as he can." "Why? What does he want? He must be mad! We'll tear him to pieces!"

"He wants me. He's coming to get me back. But I don't want to be his daemon, Iofur Raknison, I want to be yours. Because once they saw how powerful a bear was with a daemon, the people at Bolvangar decided not to do that experiment ever again. Iofur Byrnison was going to be the only bear who ever had a daemon. And with me helping him, he could lead all the bears against you. That's what he's come to Svalbard for."

The bear-king roared his anger. He roared so loudly that the crystal in the chandeliers tinkled, and every bird in the great room shrieked, and Lyra's ears rang.

But she was equal to it.

"That's why I love you best," she said to Iofur Raknison, "because you're passionate and strong as well as clever. And I just had to leave him and come and tell you, because I don't want him ruling the bears. It ought to be you. And there is a way of taking me away from him and making me your daemon, but you wouldn't know what it was unless I told you, and you might do the usual thing about fighting bears like him that've been outcast; I mean, not fight him properly, but kill him with fire hurlers or something. And if you did that, I'd just go out like a light and die with him."

"But you—how can—"

"I can become your daemon," she said, "but only if you defeat Iorek Byrnison in single combat. Then his strength will flow into you, and my mind will flow into yours, and we'll be like one person, thinking each other's thoughts; and you can send me miles away to spy for you, or keep me here by your side, whichever you like. And I'd help you lead the bears to capture Bolvangar, if you like, and make them create more daemons for your favorite bears; or if you'd rather be the only bear with a daemon, we could destroy Bolvangar forever. We

could do anything, Iofur Raknison, you and me together!"

All the time she was holding Pantalaimon in her pocket with a trembling hand, and he was keeping as still as he could, in the smallest mouse form he had ever assumed. Iofur Raknison was pacing up and down with an air of explosive excitement.

"Single combat?" he was saying. "Me? I must fight Iorek Byrnison? Impossible! He is outcast! How can that be? How can I fight him? Is that the only way?"

"It's the only way," said Lyra, wishing it were not, because Iofur Raknison seemed bigger and more fierce every minute. Dearly as she loved Iorek, and strong as her faith was in him, she couldn't really believe that he would ever beat this giant among giant bears. But it was the only hope they had.

Being mown down from a distance by fire hurlers was no hope at all. Suddenly Iofur Raknison turned.

"Prove it!" he said. "Prove that you are a daemon!"

"All right," she said. "I can do that, easy. I can find out anything that you know and no one else does, something that only a daemon would be able to find out."

"Then tell me what was the first creature I killed."
"I'll have to go into a room by myself to do this," she said. "When I'm your daemon, you'll be able to see how I do it, but until then it's got to be private."

"There is an anteroom behind this one. Go into that, and come out when you know the answer."

Lyra opened the door and found herself in a room lit by one torch, and empty but for a cabinet of mahogany containing some tarnished silver ornaments. She took out the alethiometer and asked: "Where is lorek now?"

"Four hours away, and hurrying ever faster." "How can I tell him what I've done?" "You must trust him."

She thought anxiously of how tired he would be. But then she reflected that she was not doing what the alethiometer had just told her to do: she wasn't trusting him.

She put that thought aside and asked the question Iofur Raknison wanted. What was the first creature he had killed? The answer came: Iofur's own father.

She asked further, and learned that Iofur had been alone on the ice as a young bear, on his first hunting expedition, and had come across a solitary bear. They had quarreled and fought, and Iofur had killed him. This in itself would have been a crime, but it was worse than simple murder, for Iofur learned later that the other bear was his own father. Bears were brought up by their mothers, and seldom saw their fathers. Naturally Iofur concealed the truth of what he had done; no one knew about it but Iofur himself, and now Lyra knew as well.

She put the alethiometer away, and wondered how to tell him about it.

"Flatter him!" whispered Pantalaimon. "That's all he wants."

So Lyra opened the door and found Iofur Raknison waiting for her, with an expression of triumph, slyness, apprehension, and greed.

"Well?"

She knelt down in front of him and bowed her head to touch his left forepaw, the stronger, for bears were left-handed.

"I beg your pardon, Iofur Raknison!" she said. "I didn't know you were so strong and great!"

"What's this? Answer my question!"

"The first creature you killed was your own father. I think you're a new god, Iofur Raknison. That's what you must be. Only a god would have the strength to do that."

"You know! You can see!"

"Yes, because I am a daemon, like I said."

"Tell me one thing more. What did the Lady Coulter promise me when she was here?"

Once again Lyra went into the empty room and consulted the alethiometer before returning with the answer.

"She promised you that she'd get the Magisterium in Geneva to agree that you could be baptized as a Christian, even though you hadn't got a daemon then. Well, I'm afraid that she hasn't done that, Iofur Raknison, and quite honestly I don't think they'd ever agree to that if you didn't have a daemon. I think she knew that, and she wasn't telling you the truth. But in any case when you've got me as your daemon, you could be baptized if

you wanted to, because no one could argue then. You could demand it and they wouldn't be able to turn you down."

"Yes...True. That's what she said. True, every word. And she has deceived me? I trusted her, and she deceived me?"

"Yes, she did. But she doesn't matter anymore. Excuse me, Iofur Raknison, I hope you won't mind me telling you, but Iorek Byrnison's only four hours away now, and maybe you better tell your guard bears not to attack him as they normally would. If you're going to fight him for me, he'll have to be allowed to come to the palace."

"Yes..."

"And maybe when he comes I better pretend I still belong to him, and say I got lost or something. He won't know. I'll pretend. Are you going to tell the other bears about me being Iorek's daemon and then belonging to you when you beat him?"

"I don't know....What should I do?"

"I don't think you better mention it yet. Once we're together, you and me, we can think what's best to do and decide then. What you need to do now is

explain to all the other bears why you're going to let lorek fight you like a proper bear, even though he's an outcast. Because they won't understand, and we got to find a reason for that. I mean, they'll do what you tell them anyway, but if they see the reason for it, they'll admire you even more."

"Yes. What should we tell them?"

"Tell them.. .tell them that to make your kingdom completely secure, you've called lorek Byrnison here yourself to fight him, and the winner will rule over the bears forever. See, if you make it look like your idea that he's coming, and not his, they'll be really impressed. They'll think you're able to call him here from far away. They'll think you can do anything."

"Yes..."

The great bear was helpless. Lyra found her power over him almost intoxicating, and if Pantalaimon hadn't nipped her hand sharply to remind her of the danger they were all in, she might have lost all her sense of proportion.

But she came to herself and stepped modestly back to watch and wait as the bears, under lofur's

excited direction, prepared the combat ground for lorek Byrnison; and meanwhile lorek, knowing nothing about it, was hurrying ever closer toward what she wished she could tell him was a fight for his life.