“*Another relentless battle is about to close in favour of the powerful army of the New Country*” – A voice crackled in the radio, interspersed with noise and interferences.

“*A dangerous hideout of Infidels has been allegedly located and destroyed through the efforts of the assault team Nova Luna 14…*”

”*…which has been heartily praised from the members of the Great Assembly*” – The newsreader continued.

“*The war is coming to an end…*”

The rumble of the flying hovercrafts grew dimmer into the distance.

Another day filled of explosions and flashes of fire was drawing to a close, leaving the halls of the prison plunged into the twilight.

The hallways emptied and fell into the dead of night.

A dark-haired girl walked at a quick pace into the corridors, accompanied by the slight clatter of her plastic shoes pressed against the floor.

She walked with her head down, her plush zipper pulled up to the neck.

It was almost curfew time, but instead of heading towards the dorms, she hopped into the opposite direction, turning in the corridor that brought to the common library.

She felt observed.

A complicate system of heat and motion sensors was analysing her, measuring her heartbeat and the pace of her breath, collecting details and searching any minimal sign of anomaly.

Lyra ran her fingers through her pitch-black hair in a nervous gesture.

She could sense the system.

It looked inside of her feelings, seeping through her thoughts, but despite making her feel caged, she knew it couldn’t subjugate her.

*I’m not an Infidel* – Lyra confidently thought – I am *not*.

She’d learnt over time to control that feeling of closure, and it was enough to wipe out any sense of guilt.

It screened her from the gaze of those sensors.

As soon as she’d reached the entrance of the library, Karyon recorded her presence and activated the voice identification program.

*“Please, identify to the system*” – a metallic feminine voice asked.

“Lyra Yang, prisoner number 03-0153” – She calmly replied, waiting for the program to process her request.

The automatic door unlocked with a click and let her in.

Just like the corridors, the library was quiet and deserted.

The common clock on the wall ticked past eight, already, and all the detainees had probably made their way towards their dorms.

She stepped between the bookshelves, carefully scouring every corner of the room.

A sandy-haired girl sat near a large window, apart, her face visibly focused on a portable screen that flashed a blue light on her visage.

On the desk, a really antiquated portable radio was still buzzing the news.

It had stopped with the war chronicles and recited some advertisement for some unnamed technology selling company.

Lyra gently patted Sam’s shoulder.

“You’re shutting the world out” – Lyra scolded in a faint whisper – “You’ve been avoiding me for two weeks”

Sam stared at her with her usual sharp look.

She didn’t talk.

She just laid down the book and ran her hand on her cheeks, carefully lingering her fingertips on the grooves of her scars.

“They almost disappeared…” – She whispered in a trembling voice.

“Do they hurt?”

Lyra slightly shook her head – “They never did” – She whispered back, sketching a smile.

Sam lowered her gaze and plunged herself back into the countless words on the screen, careless of her timid efforts to make her smile.

Perhaps with involuntary gestures, it almost looked like she was hiding the content to Lyra.

“You shouldn’t have come here” – She just whispered – “You *never* come here”

“I know, but I haven’t seen you for days” – She exclaimed, catching hold of her cheeks to capture her gaze – “The guardians are nervous…”

“Yeah, they’re nervous” – Sam blurted out – “That’s why you shouldn’t have shown up here”.

“I am not doing anything wrong” – Lyra argued.

“Do you think they care?” – The sandy-haired girl whispered, dimming her voice as low as possible – “They search for *anomalies*, something like going somewhere you wouldn’t usually go”

“They have brought four prisoners to the first level this week… I was worried you could be in trouble, I had to come”.

Sam didn’t answer, plunged into her thoughts.

The pleading hazel eyes of the junkie tormented her.

She couldn’t help obsessing over the memory of the three guardians, who seized her shoulders, pushed her on the floor and beat her up.

It repeated before her eyes over and over.

*It’s time for freedom*, Sam.

“They’re not nervous, they’re cruel” – Sam hissed – “I have witnessed a lot of violence during my life, none of it was merciless in such a way,” – She pondered.

“It’s necessary” – Lyra stiffly said.

“It’s *not*. They don’t normally act like this” – Sam whispered – “They want to make us consumed from guilt, undermine our strength until we fall between their open embraces…”

Sam fell silent.

“They beat *you*” – She pointed out – “You are the most believing person I have ever encountered on this fucking planet, and you get beaten”.

“I deserved it”

Sam gently placed both of her hands on Lyra’s dark skin, caressing her cheeks and holding a stare on her as intensely as she could be.

“No, you don’t” – She just said – “You’re caring, respectful towards others, stronger than an asteroid and, above all, rightful. You don’t deserve this prison”

Lyra blushed, a little bit of embarrassment pervading her body.

“There are things you don’t know about me” – She murmured.

“I don’t care if you killed four people, Lyra” – The sandy-haired girl exclaimed – “You did it out of fear, and that’s brave”.

Both stopped talking for a moment.

The rustle of the wind was still swishing on the windows, not any longer interrupted by the howling noise of the planes.

“You was beaten because of me” – Sam claimed, more talking to herself than to the other girl – “It’s all because I lied to Selene”.

“You *lied* to a guardian?” – Lyra asked, shocked.

“Shut up” – The other girl summoned, pointing to the tall shelves.

Behind the long stacks of books could be a guardian, or a poorly discreet prisoner, and she didn’t want to draw up attention.

She pointed her finger towards the screen, letting her have a look.

It wasn’t one of the newest machines.

Prisoners were supplied with all sorts of technology to be used for educational purpose, including a furnished range of portable screen, but that was really an old one.

On the white surface, it showed several pictures of a symbol.

It was a simple combination of a silvery crescent moon and a golden sun, overlapped and intertwined together.

“What is this supposed to mean…?” – Lyra asked.

“I dreamt it” – Sam replied, her eyes still steady on the screen – “Several times”

A recurring dream – they say – is an *anomaly*.

“Selene, one of the guardians of the second level, asked me to report my dream, and I tried to tell her the truth” – Sam alleged.

“But then I remembered that I’d seen that symbol before, and I omitted that detail” – She continued.

Lyra threw her another surprised glance – “Where’d you seen it?”

“My father had a copy of a book that had it on the cover” – She revealed – “It was written by someone who answered the name of L. B. Adams”.

“It’s impossible” – Lyra firmly said – “All of his books were retired and proclaimed Infidel when you were four…

The dark-haired girl assumed a swollen face – “If your father really had a copy of that, he was an Infidel”.

“What do you know about Adams?”

“He was a programmer, working for the government”