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

It was 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.

Behind the drapery of the windows, a dark-haired girl walked slowly into the corridors, her shadow accompanied with 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, her slender figure proceeded in the opposite direction.

She turned the corridor and header towards 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.

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.

An old guardian stood near the door, guarding over the room, but he looked so distracted watching at his screen that he wouldn’t even look at her.

She ignored him.

Stepping between the tall bookshelves, Lyra spotted 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.

She approached her and sat near her.

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.

“New techniques are being developed to reduce the fatigue of our glorious workers in the mines, and soon we will be able to…”

Sam punch the device and the voice immediately stopped talking.

“What did you come for?” – She murmured.

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 added.

“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 disaster of a planet”.

“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.

“My father always said we shouldn’t judge things basing on their nature” – The sandy-haired girl exclaimed – “Because they can always react and turn into something more beautiful”.

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.

“No, you was beaten because of me” – Sam claimed, more talking to herself than to the other girl.

“I tried to lie to a guardian, a few days ago, and she was mad about it”

“You did what?” – Lyra asked, shocked.

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

Behind the 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.

“Where did you see this…?” – Lyra asked.

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

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

“What do you know about this symbol?” – Lyra asked.

“Absolutely nothing about the symbol itself, but I know the man who used it” – She said, her eyes lost concern.

Sam could sense her anxiety.

“I was only fifteen” – Lyra told her – “I’d just joined the army and that was the first man I have been asked to execute”.

It took a few moments before the sandy-haired girl could digest the information, but she eventually gestured the other one to continue.

“When I injected the essentia in his wrist, I noticed he had a tattoo of that symbol” – She said – “His name was…”

“*L.H. Adams*” – Sam completed.

“I know because my father had a copy of his book, and I remember…” – She murmured, – “I can still remember it had that drawing on the cover”.

A feeble memory wavered in her memory.

Sam sat on her father’s lap, and his fingers lingered on a small volume as she read on the gilded letters.

His warm voice murmured her a story.

It spoke about brave soldiers gathered up near a bonfire under the light of the moon, telling stories about their misfortunes.

*Why do good people die, daddy?* – Sam always asked, rolling up with her hands over his shoulders.

*Because everything changes* – her father would say – *and they can always turn into something more beautiful*.

“That’s not a good thing, Sam” – Lyra interrupted her thoughts.

“Adams has been charged for Infidelity and if your father really had his books despite their banishment, he was an Infidel too”

“Maybe Adams was innocent, and someone wanted me to know it”.

Lyra glared at her liked she’d said something extremely disgusting.

“Think about it, Lyra” – Sam pointed out – “I dream a symbol I’ve unconsciously known for ages and the guardians suddenly get mad…”

“What are you driving at?”

“Karyon knows me and it certainly knows about the stories I’ve been told when I was young, but they never thought I could be an Infidel…”

“But Karyon, like any software” – Sam continued “can be *hacked*”

“Sam, are you trying to say that your father…”