“Sometimes I wonder what it feels like to be free” – Lyra sighed, her face pressed against the ample window of the common library.

It was the nightfall, the incessant ticking of the rain against the glazing clouded up the glass and the lustreless light of the sunset had started blending the skies red-shaded.

A complete quietness pervaded the atmosphere of the large room, interrupted only by the rustle of the folding pages and by the whispers people who still lingered in their lectures.

The large clock on the wall almost ticked past nine, and most people were gradually leaving the reading places and heading towards their own dorms.

Sam watched them walk away and impassively kept browsing some boring notions of chemistry on a thick red volume.

“Have you ever had the feeling that you have everything even in the middle of nothing…” – Lyra whispered, a nostalgic smile forming on her smooth skin.

“Waking up in your bed, eating what your want, stepping out of the door and running in the roads like no one cared about your sorts”

The sandy-haired girl smiled back.

“I forgot what it means” – She bitterly sighed – “But I do remember that I didn’t like going out a lot. Open spaces terrified me” – She added, shaking her head.

Had she known that a revolution would have burned down the places of her childhood, Sam would have appreciated more those tiny pieces of paradise.

She didn’t have a lot friends and the only memories she had of her classmates were blurred.

“I suspected that” – Lyra laughed.

“I’ve known you for a long time and I still don’t understand why you spend your time clinging on those heavy volumes” – She added, running a finger on the papery surface – “Books don’t talk”.

“They help me to remember” – Sam whispered, feeling her mind slowly diving into the sea of memories that flowed before her eyes.

“Sometimes I feel like I forgot who I am” – She revealed, lowering her gaze – “These books are the only thing that remind me of my father.

“They remind me of my life before they invaded”.

Four years earlier, the Infidels had attacked, throwing the population into panic.

The skies were crowded with hovercraft patrols and the ground forces outrageously frisked the houses in the poorer districts, executing any man, woman or kid who dared to resist.

The leaders of the rebellion were suspected to hide in the suburbs, and the government had enforced a new savage punitive expedition to flush them out.

Sam remembered when the energy supplies were disconnected.

Their attempts to isolate the insurgents failed one after another, and the civilians paid the consequences of their mistakes, freezing to death or starving.

Every day, at late night, Sam’s mother came back home exhausted, her face soiled with ash and her expression more hard-shelled than ever.

“*We can fight back*” – She always whispered, more to herself than to Sam’s father, who brought her a cup of tea and wiped out the blood of her wounds.

Covertly observing them from the top of the stairs, Sam often heard them quarrelling about the war, about water supplies and other arguments she couldn’t understand.

She had an intense suspicious that her mother loathed living with them.

They didn’t talk much, and as long as they could, all she did was warning them about the danger of the Infidels and the importance of staying by the New Country’s side.

And indeed, a few months later she had prepared a suitcase, had shoved in her uniforms, her cloths, her precious badge and she unceremoniously left the house.

“*Take care of her*” – She’d just whispered to Sam’s sister.

Taryn had just given her a slight nod with an icy expression and she’d stepped out of the door, her tufts of red her disappearing behind the corner of the alley.

As soon as her feet had touched the threshold, the gloomiest period of their lives had begun.

The meagre wages of her father’s pharmacy, without the salary of a guardian replenishing their wallet, weren’t enough to live with dignity.

They just carried on, without complaints.

Taryn was never home and the neighbours viciously buzzed about her walking the streets and stealing in the rubbles of the abandoned houses, but Sam didn’t believe it.

Her father spent his days working in the laboratory, murmuring formulas and tampering with the equipment, and Sam assisted him.

They passed hours and hours together, reading books and writing down data.

She was only fourteen, but a fire of pride inside of her chest made her more than willing to learn that profession that her father cultivated with such passion.

He taught her the basics of chemistry and physics.