

Xera R. Pace  
245 Heron St.,  
Reeflit Cove, VC

IV.

Dear Xera,

My father is gone. He slipped into unconsciousness sometime in the night. The thin coat of perspiration produced by the fever evaporated as his body went still and cold to my touch. He did not wake. Two days have passed. I could not bring myself to write before now.

The Relic he died for is here, sterile yet menacing. Until the end, he was convinced it held some secret to the Rift. Now I am left to echo his conviction without proof as the research and expedition team looks to me to lead them, either deeper into the heart of the alien wilderness, or home. No doubt, most would be glad to return.

Tonight we bury my father. I've decided he will be laid to rest here in the alien wilderness he died to understand. And we will carry on with our research despite misgivings, my own included.

Xera... I realize now I never knew grief. When Aleppo died, his wounds were terrible – I did not think a scream could come from a man like that. I can remember with awful vividness the agony of his throes as the beast tore into him and stole his life. He died bravely and I mourned him as a friend of many years and felt deep sorrow at his loss.

But this. Xera. It is a tearing away for which there is no remedy. There is an instinctive understanding in me that I will not recover from this loss. I will only have to account for the change, like a wounded soldier accounting for a lost limb.

I hope this letter finds you in good health. Know I think of you often, and draw on the memory of our time together for strength. I will write again when I can, though soon we will depart camp and head further inland where the chance to send letters by courier will drastically diminish and may take some time to reach you.

With love,  
*Adorna X*