

Quillion Deep

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Author's Notes: All I own is my pride and my sword.

I could say that I never imagined that it would come to this, but I would be lying. This ending has appeared inside my mind before. It's lingered in the depth of my soul, locked in a black steel box and buried in the farthest corner of my mind. I'd often hear it from beneath the earth—a pulse, a beat, the soft ticking of a clock. Easily ignored and obsolete or incessantly maddening. It was my tell-tale heart; not a haunting reminder of the past, but a vacillating omen of some unavoidable future.

A sickening sheathing sound and I know you hear my breath hitch. Our ardent perspirations coalesce as our foreheads meet; breaths commingle and beat a torrid path to my lungs. Your arms wrap 'round my back and hands grab hold of my shoulders, their grip impeded by the sudden cold sweat upon their palms.

"Don't tell me you're sorry."

Neither of us would ever die so easily. Another thrust, a counter clockwise twist, and I can feel the blood running down our abdomens, slipping over my hand like warm, thick silk. Your finger tips bury themselves into my back—ten fiery brands to carry with me. My grasp upon the hilt falters, and I am pressed painfully against the dull pommel, flush with you from the chest down until the metal shaft forces us violently apart.

I've forgotten to breathe. A gasp remedies that insignificant matter. You lurch backwards and begin to fall, your direction pulls the blade from your flesh and it drops to the ground. The resounding clatter it makes splits the silence that is suffocating us. Stumbling again, you fall backwards on to the bed, your vice-like grip carrying me with you. I am over you, straddling you, sweating and gasping like so many times before. Those times were under much sweeter circumstances.

What should I say? How should I comfort you as you die by my hand? I want to beg you to understand, plead with you to forgive me for what is not yet finished. Looking into your eyes, I know you feel my regret, the guilt that has already settled upon me. Droplets fall upon your face and it takes me a moment to realize that I am crying, that my gasps have become sobs.

One of your hands runs down my back to caress my bare thigh. I try to pull away, to protest, but I am weak and fettered by your heated embrace. A spasm runs through you, your fingers now digging into my thigh—five more small bruises to speak of what I've done. My fingers whisper across the sides of your face and I slip my hands into your hair. You stare at me. Your lips open in what I assume to be a silent plea. I should know better than to make assumptions when it comes to you. Your other hand slides up my back to the nape of my neck and you pull me down to kiss you.

I do. I would give you anything you ask for. A kiss, my world, my life... But I cannot let you betray everything that I believe in, all I've fought so hard for. I cannot turn a blind

eye to what I know to be the truth of your loyalties. Believe me, I may as well have taken your dagger from your gut and stabbed it through my heart. And I may, in time, but for now I will ensure a melancholy victory for the light.

My lips leave yours, and I briefly hope you have poisoned them for my benefit. I feel your heartbeat slow, and I know that this will be over momentarily. Words escape me. I know not what to say. A deep intake of breath shifts my position above you, and you speak for me.

"I love you," slips out over the top of a ragged, almost relieved exhale. Your body stills and your undying eyes continue to stare into my soul.

I now understand why lovers usually attack from the back. It would be easier had you returned this foul favor in silence. For I know, I truly know, that your words will eternally echo in my ears and your black eyes will haunt me forever.