**Iorek’s Armour**

Iorek raced down the cobbled street; terrified people scuttled out of his careering way. Pantalaimon glided overhead, pointing Lyra in the right direction as she tried to keep up with Iorek’s increasing pace. Muddy paws gripping the icy stones on the ground, Iorek launched his massive, furry body onto the oak door of the priest’s house. Splinters of the expensive wood showered Lyra and entangled themselves in her startling, bright hair. Pantalaimon jumped to the ground as a small lion and curled himself up against Lyra’s quivering body, sending springs of warmth into her numb bones.

Screams suddenly pierced the air around them and a plump maid darted out of the dilapidated house as fast as her little sausage legs could take her. Tears decorated her chubby cheeks as her duck daemon waddled frantically away from the shards of glass that sprinkled the garden. She heard a man pleading for mercy and fingers fumbling on a lock amongst the hectic noises of the night.

Iorek roared with passionate vengeance as he appeared in the ruined doorway of the house. Lyra stared in amazement; without his armour, Iorek was terrifying, with it, he was formidable. Long, bloody fangs bared, the bear gazed lazily at the shocked people, but when Lyra looked closer, there was a gentle pity hidden in his bored expression and she longed to once again stuff her hands in his thick, coffee coloured fur and treasure it forever.

By now, the people had retreated to their homes and helplessly locked all their windows and doors. Lyra and Pantalaimon watched awestruck as Iorek dove into the freezing river with a great splash. Seconds later, the mighty bear leapt onto the muddy slush of ice that lined the frozen pier. Lyra noticed (with much curiosity) that Iorek had a piece of seal blubber in between his mouth…

A sound like oil nurturing the wounds of a rusty bike blocked Lyra’s freezing ears as she saw Iorek rubbing the thick, soothing fat onto his treasured armour. Lyra saw rough patches of uneven metal where the original masterpiece must have once been. It was truly beautiful and Lyra admired the way in which Iorek tended to his armour through the grace and gentleness in which Lyra would tend to Pantalaimon’s scars.

Only when the armour was sparkling clean did Iorek seem to acknowledge Lyra and Pantalaimon’s presence. He grinned an unsettling toothy smile when his gaze fell on Lyra’s gaping mouth. Crimson paw raised, Iorek gestured for Lyra to clamber onto his back and she obeyed, curious to feel his daemon like armour beneath her red, furry mittens. With a flick of his fluffy ear, Iorek bounded away from the street and back towards the boat where John Faa and Farder Coram were supposed to expect them.