

Dandelion Wishes

Lynn Renard

The rebellion won the day before Dandelion's first granddaughter was born. No longer chained to the deposed king of Naryn, Dandelion got to be present at the birth and hold the bundle of heaven first after her parents.

He cradled the little perfection in one arm, mindful of her delicate dragonfly wings, and traced her round features with his free hand. "Have they named you yet, my heart?" he whispered, knowing he shouldn't wake her but longing to see her look at him.

Truth, his wife, rested her chin on his shoulder, lightly enough not to aggravate his injuries. "Lioness."

Dandelion blinked. Opened his mouth. Blinked again. "Oh."

She vibrated against him with suppressed laughter.

To be the namesake of one's offspring was common enough, but his particular name usually evoked floral offshoots. For his daughter and son-in-law to have honed in on 'lion'...

He tipped his head against his wife's. "Did you have something to do with that?"

"There's no physical evidence of any such thing."

He chuckled softly, shaking his head. After more than two decades of marriage, he really shouldn't be surprised anymore.

How would Lioness grow up hearing her name's story told? Would she believe that the grandfather who was sure to spoil her had any connection to fierceness? Dandelion wasn't sure he believed it himself.

He swept his gaze around the room. Lioness's parents cuddled on a plush loveseat, the boy gazing at his wife with worshipful eyes. Dandelion, remembering the day his twin girls came into the world, could relate.

His other daughter sat cross-legged on the floor with her sister's in-laws, sneaking glances at the baby. Faeries of the newborn's great-grandparent generation hovered on the other side of the room, unabashedly staring as they conversed and gestured to their various features.

Even Snow and Princess Ingro had joined the occasion, restored to grace and whispering to each other from where they stood against the wall.

They were all alive. Happy. Free.

Fingers stroked the hair at his temple, and he leaned into Truth's touch.

"Some new hairs are coming in white," she whispered. "Apt, considering all the wishes coming true right now."

When a dandelion's petals turned white, one could make a wish upon the seeds and blow them (wish and seeds alike) into the world to germinate and bring new life – or so the lore went. The story's personal connection may have made more sense if Dandelion were blond, but he understood the wish his parents had bestowed upon seeing his white-and-green wings: longevity. Little could they have guessed the threats to cut him down before his black hair had the chance to whiten.

He stared down at the sleeping star in his arms and had to blink back moisture in his eyes. "We're alive."

Truth's chin moved against his shoulder in a small nod. She sniffled quietly, then pressed a soft kiss at his temple, on those white hairs.

"What's your wish, beloved?" he whispered.

She kissed him again, her lips trembling against his skin as she lingered.

He turned and passed Lioness to her, then slipped behind the two of them, wrapped his arms around his wife's waist, and hid his face in her hair.

If his shoulders shook, if Truth's hair grew wet, if anyone noticed, at least he was silent enough that the baby slept on.

At peace, secure, as each set of loving arms in the room took their turn holding her.

Dandelion could wish for nothing more.