

He stopped what he was doing, and looked at her as if for the first time. His dæmon turned her great green leopard-eyes on her too, and under the concentrated gaze of both of them, Lyra blushed. But she gazed back fiercely.

“Your place is here,” said her uncle finally.

“But why? Why is my place here? Why can’t I come to the North with you? I want to see the Northern Lights and bears and icebergs and everything. I want to know about Dust. And that city in the air. Is it another world?”

“You’re not coming, child. Put it out of your head; the times are too dangerous. Do as you’re told and go to bed, and if you’re a good girl, I’ll bring you back a walrus tusk with some Eskimo carving on it. Don’t argue any more or I shall be angry.”

And his dæmon growled with a deep savage rumble that made Lyra suddenly aware of what it would be like to have teeth meeting in her throat.

Lyra compressed her lips and frowned hard at her uncle. He was pumping the air from the vacuum flask, and took no notice; it was as if he’d already forgotten her. Without a word, but with lips tight and narrowed eyes, the girl and her dæmon left and went to bed.