

Bells and Dandelion

By C. Jade Wyton

Daimon Stoneclaw steels his nerves, and asks Olivia Bluebell to be his partner.

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Daimon lay in bed, heaving a heavy sigh as he stared up at the roof.

The hells were a surprisingly comfortable place to stay. At least, temporarily. He liked it better than the Shattered Isles— It was sweltering hot and smelt like brimstone and ash, but there was no sand scratching him down to his skin. And the food was more to his taste.

Another sigh, and Daimon rolled to his feet to stare out his window at the city below.

He still couldn't get his talk with Bertram from his mind, and had been considering what Bertram had told him very seriously:

*Don't go jumping into anything, consider what you want. You have a lot of feelings you have to work through.*

Well. He *had* been thinking on it. Almost *constantly* since their talk. And he'd realised, above all else... he didn't want to be alone, anymore.

He heaved yet another heavy sigh and licked his lips, his eyes cutting to the sending stone on his bedside table.

'Ask her how she's doing, and if she can handle talking about something serious,' Daimon reminded himself of Bertram's instructions, as he picked up the stone and activated it. 'Take it slowly. Don't rush into it...'

It rung once.

*Don't rush.*

Twice.

*Take it slow.*

Four times—

'Daimon?' Olivia answered. 'Are you alright? Why are you calling so early—'

'I think I've fallen in love with you!' he blurted; not meaning to interrupt her, but unable to stop himself. 'Talking to you is the best part of my day. And when we're not talking, all I can think about is the end of the day, when I get to talk to you. Being apart makes my chest hurt, and I wish I could talk to you all the time and never stop!'

There was a moment of quiet from Olivia's side of the sending stone.... And then the sound of laughter—not from Olivia, but from all of the other Dawn Runners in her world— echoed out of the stone.

'D-Daimon!' Olivia stuttered; her tone embarrassed enough that Daimon could only imagine the blush creeping up her neck and cheeks. 'I— This is— Wow. *Wow.*'

'I'm sorry,' Daimon managed. 'Bertram told me to tell you slowly. And I meant to. But it just came out.'

'No, uh... that's... that's okay,' she managed. 'I maybe.... *Shut up, Volante!* I

just wasn't expecting.... *Veruca stop! I'll fucking kill you!* I just wasn't expecting to hear that, after our last talk.'

Daimon let out his long breath. 'I was thinking about what you'd said. About not letting myself be happy.... And so I talked to Bertram. And Bertram told me to think about what I wanted. And I.... I remembered what you said. That Liv wouldn't want me to be lonely. And... I don't want myself to be lonely, either.'

He heard Olivia swallow, over the stone, before she cleared her throat and said in a quivering voice: 'And you... want to be with me?'

Daimon nodded, then realised she couldn't see him and spoke aloud: 'Yes, I.... You're such a funny, sweet person. I love talking to you. We have a lot in common—our children, our work, the food we like and our senses of humour— and I think we might be compatible. And I'd... even if it's hard over the distance, I'm... I want to try?'

'Oh.'

'I think what I'm trying to say is... Olivia, would you go out with me?'

'Oh... uh.... Can.... Can you excuse me for a second?' Olivia mumbled. 'I'll just be a moment,'

'Oh?' Daimon felt his heart sink at the request, but he swallowed back the anxiety and tried to keep his breathing even as he replied. 'Yeah. Of course.'

'Thanks.'

He heard Olivia put the stone down, and the muffled sound of her exiting the room was covered by the jeers of her family— And then she gave an audible shout of joy.

'*YES!*' it was barely as loud as a whisper from the distance she'd put between herself and the stone, but it still made Daimon smile. '*YES! YES! OH MY GODS! YES! WOO! WOO! OH WOO! AH! AAH! AAAAAAAH!*'

Daimon's heart fluttered back into place as Olivia gave a happy shriek, before she made her way back to the phone and spoke as if she *hadn't* just been screaming at the top of her lungs:

'That sounds really nice, Daimon. I'd love to go out with you.'

The sound of Volante's cackling followed, and Olivia hissed at her to shut up.

Then, Daimon heard the other world's Xynera commenting:

'Wait, so now we have to keep track of *two* Daimons? Isn't that going to be, like, confusing?'

'You could give me a nickname?' Daimon suggested. 'And, maybe I could give you a nickname, too, so it's less confusing when I talk about... Liv....'

His heart sunk for a moment, thinking about the woman he'd lost— But he pushed the thoughts away; reminding himself that his wife would have wanted him to have been happy, even through her jealousy, and that she would understand that he still loved her.

'Daimon?' Olivia asked.

'I'm alright,' he gave a nervous chuckle. 'I just have a lot of feelings, right now.'

'Yeah, me too,' Olivia replied, her laugh just as nervous as his. 'Hm.... A nickname, huh?'

'Only if you want—'

'Dandelion,' she answered.

‘Dandelion?’ Daimon echoed. ‘I like that. It makes me sound like a happy flower.’

‘*As dumb as a flower,*’ someone mumbled playfully from over the stone, and the sound of a very hard slap followed. ‘Ow! Fuck! *Liv!*’

‘Do you mind the name Bells?’ Daimon asked, ignoring the arguing on the other end of the stone. ‘Because we’ve been calling you Olivia Bluebell, and Bells is a cute way of shortening that. And, also, because your black markings are all rings—not stripes like my wife had—and you ring bells.’

‘*Aw,*’ Olivia cooed. ‘You remember what my markings look like?’

‘Well... yes, they were very pretty,’ Daimon admitted.

‘*Oooooo— OW!*’

The sound of Olivia smacking Veruca echoed through the stone, and Daimon couldn’t help but laugh.

He was glad she’d been so receptive— Especially since he’d not taken his time to bring up the topic, like he’d intended to, and just blurted it out like an idiot.

‘So, uh...’ he cleared his throat as there was a knock on his door, and Sheshalan called out that it was time for dinner. ‘I have to go. But I’ll call you later, and we can talk about this more, then?’

‘Yeah! Okay!’ Olivia said, her voice perking up. ‘After dinner! I’ll be waiting!’

‘Okay.... Goodbye, Olivia,’ Daimon chuckled. ‘Tell Jamie I said hi.’

‘I will— But in return, you gotta give your Farren a message from me.’

‘Oh, sure, what message?’

She blew a long, loud raspberry into the stone, and then hung up.

—END—

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