

Sending Stone Catch-Up

By C. Jade Wyton

Olivia Bluebell anxiously waits for a call from an alternate universe's Daimon Stoneclaw. Upon his call, they talk about their different worlds, and skim the edges of their complicated feelings.

Contains depictions of grief.

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Olivia had been waiting for Daimon's call all day. She'd been worried ever since he had told her about "Sheshalan's" strange behaviour — "Sheshalan," in quotations, as she *also* agreed that there was no way that could possibly be the Sheshalan she met, who cared so deeply about her friends— and now that he was late to their nightly calls, she was terrified that something had happened to him.

She'd kept the sending stone in her pocket as she'd put Jamie to bed, even letting her son stay up ten extra minutes, as he wanted to talk to "the fun man on the phone" again; though when Daimon hadn't called he'd fallen asleep waiting. Olivia had moved to her bed after that. And then, after another hour had passed, she'd moved to Bertram's empty bed so she could curl up in his sheets and ease her anxieties with her father's comforting smell.

She still hadn't had time, after returning to Thistlebond from Skipsdale, to properly contact her brother.

She'd sent him a letter, using the details that Daimon had given her, but she wasn't sure that... he would even actually *be* there. This was a different world, after all. Maybe her brother in this world was dead, and the letter would never arrive....

The stone she held tight in her claw vibrated; getting through half a ring before she answered and blurted, loudly:

'Daimon? Daimon is that you?!

'Yes, it's me,' Daimon answered, sounding tired but calm. 'I'm sorry I'm late. Did I worry you?'

'Y-Yeah, I was *really* worried,' Olivia admitted. 'I thought something happened to you!'

'Well... something *did*,' he said, gently. 'But I'm okay now.'

'What happened?'

'Well, you know how Sheshalan was acting weird?'

'Yeah?'

'Yeah. She was possessed.'

'Possessed? By what?'

'A different Sheshalan.'

Olivia felt like a rock was suddenly sinking in her stomach.

'Yeah,' Daimon continued. 'An evil Sheshalan. I never thought that Sheshalan could be evil in *any* universe, but Volante talked to her. Farren was there, and he told me about it afterwards; she was working for Edacity.'

Olivia took a long pause, the horror of the idea of *Sheshalan* working for that— That horrible creature—

‘She tried to use a spell on me, but I think my brain was too empty for it to work,’ he joked; clearly trying to coax a laugh out of Olivia. ‘Then she put a different spell on me, but I was so strong I snapped it in half. Then Veruca choked her until she passed out, and we took the evil *Sheshalan*’s soul out of her, and put it in a fish, which then got put in a jar.’

‘One of Veruca’s jars?’ Olivia managed,

‘Yeah, one of Veruca’s.’

‘Gross.’

‘Yeah...’ a moment of quiet passed before Daimon sighed. ‘Good news, though? We got Ornest out of prison.’

‘You did?’

‘Veruca proved it was a mistrial,’ Daimon explained. ‘That the jury had been threatened. I’m not really sure how exactly it went—I didn’t understand half of what was being said—but he’s out, now.’

‘Well... I’m glad,’ Olivia said, genuinely. ‘Your *Volante* must be happy about that.’

‘She is,’ Daimon gave a low chuckle. ‘They’re staying at a hotel, tonight. I can only imagine how that’s going.’

Olivia echoed the chuckle. ‘Ornest sounds like a slut.’

The laugh she received was hearty, and came through the stone loud enough to make the audio tweak.

‘Have you found *Xynera* yet?’

‘No, not yet,’ Daimon told her. ‘We’re going to go looking for her tomorrow.’

‘I hope you find her.’

‘So do I, she’s a good kid. She doesn’t deserve all of this....’

‘No,’ Olivia agreed. ‘If ours is anything to go off, she’s a sweetheart.’

Daimon quietly agreed; his tone low and tired. ‘Did you hear back from your brother today?’

‘No,’ Olivia answered. ‘Nothing, yet.’

‘I hope it goes well.’

‘Yeah. So do I.’

The pair fell into quiet, for a moment, as they both thought about what had been said.

Then, Daimon gave an audible purr. ‘Thank you for always talking to me, Olivia,’ he said. ‘It gives me something to look forward to every night. And I need that, right now, while things are so hard.’

Olivia’s heart beat hard, as Daimon’s purr grew louder, and she found herself pulling the sheets tighter around herself as she swallowed. ‘I really appreciate it, too. And Jamie likes talking with you—I look forward to talking to Robin, more. When everything calms down and you can get back to *Thistlebond*. She seems like a smart kid.’

‘She takes after her mother,’ Daimon agreed.

And Olivia felt her heart ache at the reminder.

Despite all her similarities to that world’s Olivia— She wasn’t the woman that this Daimon loved. And this wasn’t *her* Daimon. Despite the short moments she

forgot herself to his charm, she knew that.

He hadn't those charming, freckle-like spots along his snout. And the nick in his ear had been on the wrong side....

Even his voice was different— Just a little. The way he cleared his throat wasn't the same; the sound coming from deep in his chest, rather than the front of his throat like her Daimon did. And his purr rumbled differently....

It made her wonder what was different about her, to his Olivia; what made him know she wasn't his.

She swallowed as Daimon purred again, and began telling her all the updates he had been receiving on his daughter.

It was clear to her, as he spoke, that this was a good man. A kind man. A man full of so much love that he was close to bursting.

And she found herself purring, too.

And then blushing, as he began to tell her about all the quirks he had been learning about his new weapon. It's weight, the best angle to hold it when he released the shield, which axe head was sharper—

It was so endearing that Olivia had to cross her legs, just to keep herself from attempting to crawl through the sending stone to sit in his lap.

He may not have been *her* husband; but he was the exact kind of man she loved listening to.

And when she thought of him —that beautiful body he had held her with, and those hands he had stroked in her hair to comfort her before she had returned to her own world— she felt a tingling feeling in her fur that she hadn't felt in years... almost a decade.

Was it strange, to be so attracted to a Daimon from another universe?

It was a little bit like crushing on her husband's brother, she supposed.

'Olivia?' Daimon's voice grew soft. 'You're being very quiet, are you alright?'

'Yeah,' she answered honestly. 'I'm just enjoying the sound of your voice.'

'Oh?'

'You're fun to listen to,' she told him. 'I used to listen to my Daimon talk, to help me fall asleep.'

'I used to listen to my Olivia to fall asleep,' he admitted. 'She would tell me all her stories; things she definitely didn't do, but liked to pretend she had.'

'Daimon used to tell me things I knew he definitely *had* done, because I was there to see it,' Olivia giggled. 'I didn't mind hearing the same story twice, though. I just wanted to hear him talk.'

Daimon echoed her giggle with a deep rumbling chuckle. 'I didn't mind the lies, for the same reason.'

'Have you really... *never* considered trying to find someone else?' she asked.

'Olivia was my soulmate. And I... I still hope to meet her in the afterlife.'

'The afterlife,' Olivia gave a quiet scoff of disbelief. Then, her voice softened. 'It's nice to think my Daimon might still exist, somewhere.'

'It's a comfort,' Daimon agreed. Then, after a pause, he asked. 'Have *you* thought about meeting someone else?'

'No,' she answered honestly. 'I've been tired. And busy with Jamie.'

'I was busy with Robin,' Daimon acknowledged; a chuckle escaping him over their shared experience.

‘You know...’ Olivia swallowed the lump in her throat. ‘If your Olivia was anything like me, she wouldn’t want you to be lonely.’

Daimon was quiet for a long, long moment. Then he sighed. ‘She was a lot like you, actually.’

Olivia was quiet.

‘Was your Daimon like me?’

‘He was.’

‘Well... you know that he wouldn’t want you to be lonely, either.’

A shiver ran up Olivia’s spine at the softness in Daimon’s tone.

*Was he implying...?*

No. He couldn’t be. Daimon didn’t *imply* things. He was so forward— Though, this Daimon wasn’t the same as her Daimon. And maybe this was one of those differences....

‘I know it’s not exactly... healthy, to hold on to the past so tight,’ Daimon admitted. ‘I’m scared, though, that if I got with someone, she might think I was replacing her. Especially if it was....’

Olivia felt her heart leap as Daimon trailed off.

*If it was who?* she almost asked aloud. Though, she didn’t— It was clear he was going to say *her*.

Olivia swallowed. ‘She wouldn’t want you to be alone for the rest of your life,’ she repeated, softly. ‘You know that, right? She’d want you to be happy; and she’d know that you’re a person who needs to love, in order to be happy. She’d understand that.’

Daimon’s breath came out in a quiver. ‘I’m scared,’ he repeated. ‘I’m scared that, even if she *does* understand, it will still hurt her to see.’

‘I know,’ Olivia answered.

‘I once saw her yell at her own reflection, because she saw the mirror when I kissed her and felt jealous that her reflection had kissed me, too.’

‘I did that, too,’ Olivia felt herself blush.

‘I just don’t want to hurt her.’

‘I know. But you’re hurting yourself,’ she surprised herself as she said it. It sounded like something Bertram or Sheshalan might say, to her.

Daimon heaved a long, miserable sigh. ‘I know.’

The hurt in Daimon’s voice ripped through Olivia’s heart, and she wanted nothing more than to reach out and embrace him.

‘I think you need to stop over-compromising,’ she said, forcing herself to speak with an even tone. ‘If she was alive, would you sacrifice as much for her, as you’ve sacrificed for her memory?’

‘Yes,’ Daimon answered without hesitation.

‘Oh, right, it’s *you*,’ she felt herself chuckle. ‘Of course you would have, you wonderful idiot.’

*I would have done anything for her,* he breathed.

‘Then why won’t you let yourself be happy, when you know it’s what she would have wanted?’

Daimon was quiet, and it was clear he was thinking.

And in the quiet, Olivia heard several people returning home and making their way through the hall. Volante paused at the open door and peered in at

Olivia, lying in Bertram's bed with the sending stone on the pillow beside her, and gave an empathetic hum.

'Is Dad home?' Olivia asked.

'Which one?'

'*Both?*' Olivia winced.

'Yeah,' Volante shifted aside, letting Bertram and Farren both enter their room, and then headed off to her own room.

Olivia swallowed as both her fathers joined her on the bed; sitting on the edges either side of her to take off their boots.

Then, Fern rushed in; leaping up and onto her, and giving a happy giggle as she snuggled under Olivia's arm.

'Are you on the sending stone again?' she asked.

Olivia nodded. 'Yes. It's Daimon.'

'Hello, Mr Daimon!' Fern said, moving her mouth *far* too close to stone and raising her voice. 'Are you still being sad?'

'Aye! Enough from you, monkey!' Farren exclaimed, grabbing the girl and hefting her over his shoulder. 'I thought you were going to let yer aunt Veruca get you in bed! It's past yer bedtime!'

'Veruca said, if you're not paying her, she doesn't owe you *squat*!'

Olivia heard a rumbling laugh come through the stone, and she watched as Farren carried the young girl out of his room and into Jamie's, where her own temporary bed had been made up.

'How are ya, Daimon?' Bertram asked.

'Surviving,' Daimon gave a humoured purr. 'I think... well, I'm not sure *exactly* what happened, because it was all very confusing to hear, but I think my Bertram might have put Morriano's soul in a box and given it to Volante. And Volante put him in a projector. Evil Sheshalan owed him money.'

'That's... hm,' Bertram gave an awkward hum. 'Evil Sheshalan?'

'Yeah. There's an evil Sheshalan,' Daimon heaved a sigh. 'She lives in a fish, now.'

'*Okay*,' Bertram clicked his tongue. 'That don't sound too good, do it?'

'It's not good,' Daimon confirmed.

'Hm.'

'Ah!' Farren burst back into the room. 'Monkey's in bed! Now to check on my little fugitive!'

'Farren!' Olivia laughed as her father leapt on the bed beside her and gave her a tickle. 'Stop! *Daimon's* on the stone! Don't embarrass me!'

'Aw, I'm sure he doesn't mind!'

Olivia gave a squeal as Farren wrestled her down, and Daimon's laughter echoed through the stone as Bertram grabbed Farren by the arm and pulled him away from their daughter.

'Let her be, sunshine,' he scolded.

'Yeah, let me be!' Olivia mocked, before rolling over and grabbing the sending stone. 'I have *important* people to talk to!'

'Ah, my heart!' Farren placed his hands on his chest, pretending like he was in pain, and flopped onto the bed beside Olivia. 'Yer've struck me hard, Liv. Oh, I don't think I'll make it!'

Daimon laughed again, then gave a sniff. 'Should I let you go—'  
'*NO!*' Olivia cried, then she blushed sheepishly as both her parents gave her humoured looks. 'I mean. *No*. Would you...' she glanced back at her parents, who grinned at her, before getting out of their bed and hurriedly retreating to the privacy of her own room. She flopped into her own bed and curled up, holding the sending stone close as she spoke in a soft, almost-pleading tone: 'Will you talk to me, until I'm asleep?' she asked. 'Please?'  
'I can do that.'

—END—

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