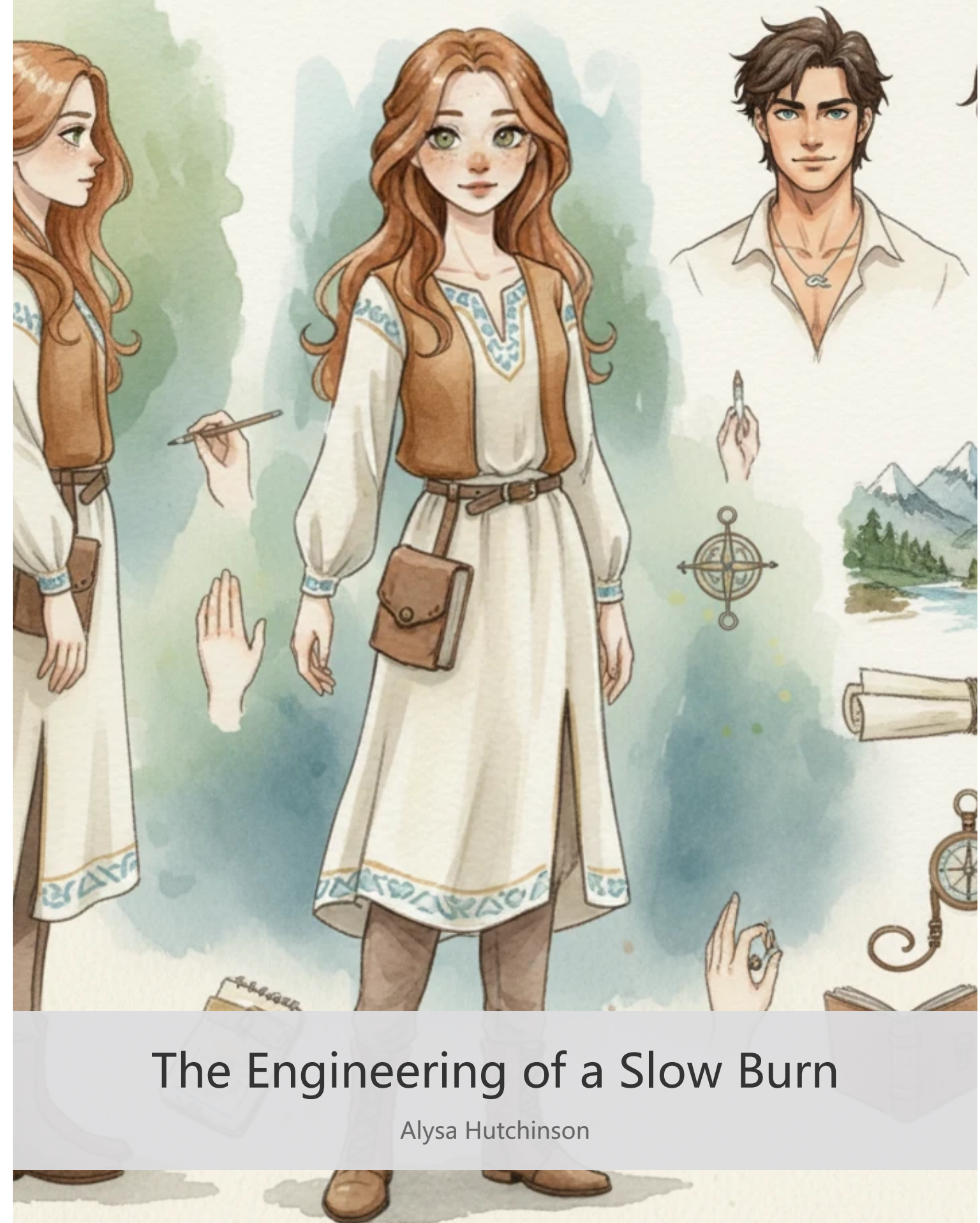


LEO: TRAVELLER'S OUTFIT



The Engineering of a Slow Burn

Alysa Hutchinson



Alysa, clutching a book and a caramel-drenched iced coffee, bumps into a towering 6'2" figure at the local cafe. The height difference is immediate as he looks down at her long black hair, and her quiet world suddenly feels much smaller and more interesting.



Sitting across from each other, they discover a shared world of anime and languages, whispering to each other in Japanese to keep their conversation private. He is captivated by her soft mumbling of High Valyrian, finding her nerdy secrets and bored linguistic talents unexpectedly endearing.

## A LONG DISTANCE LOVE



Months pass in a slow-burn haze, with nightly Facetimes ending in them falling asleep together on screen from their separate rooms. Alysa often wears his massive, oversized jumpers that swallow her 5'4" frame, unaware that he loves seeing her wrapped in his clothes.

## THE CARTOGRAPHER & THE SWIMMER



While her university peers see a quiet girl in engineering labs, her true heart lies in her magical trunk that contains a massive, enchanted room. Inside, a sprawling cottagecore sanctuary exists, filled with fairy lights and dragon-themed decor that feels like a village from a fantasy novel.



Their friendship reaches a point where they share a bed every night, his protective arm naturally draped over her as they sleep. Alysa remains blissfully dense, believing this level of intimacy is just what best friends do, while he patiently waits for her to realize he has been treating her like his girlfriend for months.



Trusting him completely, Alysa reveals her magic by enchanting his beloved car to run on water and creating a secret switch for a cozy bedroom in the back. They lay together in the car, watching the stars through a roof she spelled to stay clear and warm regardless of the weather outside.



At the university, the popular athlete bends down to look directly into Alysa's eyes, ignoring the crowd of girls vying for his attention. He takes a candid photo of her reading, immediately setting it as his lock screen while she blushes, still confused by his intense and constant focus on her.



When a group of girls tries to flirt with him, Alysa's quiet demeanor vanishes, replaced by a fierce, possessive spark. She steps closer to him and claims his space with a silent authority that makes him smirk, secretly enjoying her sudden lioness protective streak.



After a year and a half of friendship, he finally catches her hands and tells her clearly that he wants to date her. The realization finally hits her, and the slow-burn tension breaks into a sweet, possessive embrace that confirms what everyone else in their circle already knew.



Now officially a couple, he proudly wears her pink scrunchie on his wrist while she takes over the passenger seat of his car with her books and sweet coffees. They navigate life between engineering labs and magical trunks, two souls perfectly matched in their own secret, sweet, and enchanted world.