

Erwin stood a few metres away, he stood with his back turned to Anabelle and with his hands clenching the white and terracotta marble railing on the balcony of the room. It was a balcony that looked out to half the city and half the ocean, it was on the other side of the wings as Anabelle's, though hers was also two stories higher, maybe three and it was a significant amount larger, but his did not look out to the harbour, just straight ocean and the city. And the boy didn't look back towards the sorceress, instead his eyes moved out towards the sea and the rooftops of the city and he sighed, a sad and sombre sigh that showed that he was homesick, or sad. The *feredir* looked down and stared at the streets where people moved back indoors and some moved out in pairs of two or four or larger. And the lights of the city began to light, lights that Erwin had not seen before, and the sun was setting and he breathed out into the air and thought of his home and his grandmother and what she would think about where he stood now. And again his eyes wandered around, towards the sea and his ears moved with the sound of the music that was unfamiliar to his Navakan ear, and he looked down at the place where the ocean met the rocks and where kids would jump into the water.

"What are you remembering?" Anabelle asked from behind Erwin, her arms moving around his bare chest and her face resting softly now on his warm scarred back. She could feel him breathe in and out and his heart as well, how it moved and thumped like a reliable drum that would not stop any time soon. And his heart seemed to speed up when she first touched his skin but now began to slow and become normal again as her head did not move away.

"In Navaka," Erwin began, touching Anabelle's hand with his own, beckoning her to move to his side where he could see and touch her.

"Yes?"

"In Navaka, we have festivals around this time of the year," he said with a low sad smile, his hand on hers squeezing lightly and with a caring touch. "It's when most people get married," he continued.

"They're called the *Solais Sonas*,"

"The lights of happiness? Why is it called that?" Anabelle questioned with a light smile to the elven name of the Northern tradition, she often felt sad to know that her culture had not raised her with more

traditions of magic, as she grew up on the border of Arihant and Sonsbrough, the ‘magicless kingdom’ and the ‘one run by a witch’. It was odd that even her mother had not raised her with more traditional magical thoughts and holidays and whatnot. But her mother thought herself a god, so she was the only one that Anabelle could praise.

“We used to make lamps, they were made of paper and flimsy pieces of wood that we couldn’t use as firewood, twigs really.” he said with a smile of remembrance. “They were meant to be the people that we had lost and that we had still not forgotten, my grandmother would make one every year for my father, and we would make one for my mother and grandfather.”

“Would you keep them for the year?”

“No, the ceremony would take place at night, and the only light in the entire village would be the torch that was carried by the elder, then the two who were to be wedded, would interlock hands...” in that moment Erwin took his hands into Anabelle’s he faced her and gave her a sweet smile.

“And as their hands were interlocked, they would allow the elder to place a cloth woven or sewn from both families together.” Anabelle finished as she smiled towards Erwin.

“You know Navakan marriage rituals?” the young *feredir* asked with a small hushed laugh.

“I do read,” Anabelle laughed with him, “What next, you haven’t told me how the paper lamps come into play at all.”

“When their hands are intertwined and all, that is when we push the paper lamps up, into the sky, and with the help of whatever mage our town or village has-”

“They float up?”

“And they begin to shine,”

“Isn’t that the time that the frozen lightning bugs fly?” Anabelle asked with a smile on her face.

“It is, and sometimes we can’t tell our lamps and them apart.” Erwin said as his eye slid to the side where the stones met the ocean once more. And he smiled his sombre smile that he held and he then looked at Anabelle again. He noted how her hair shimmered with the setting sun,

how it made it seem gold even though she had striking black hair, and her eyes shimmered brighter violet despite the sun that tried to pierce them. And she smiled and tried not to laugh and she held her breath and her nose trembled with an acute shiver and she looked at him as well and she smiled and faked the same studying that he was doing to her.