

Winter was finally here. Hearth felt strange, being in Cassidy's house instead of somewhere out in the snowstorm. It was his first winter in a proper shelter, having been used to trying to find something to crawl or fit himself into to stay warm before. Cassidy's couch was warm and dry, better than any cold, abandoned building, but was somewhat small compared to Hearth's large frame laying on it. Hearth was surprised Cassidy had any blankets, let alone one that would fit him—having been stoking the coals of the fireplace when Cassidy offered it. Now the coals glowed softly in the dark room as Hearth huddled beneath the blanket, staring at the fireplace from his place on the couch. Cassidy had shown him how to light and tend to the fireplace a few days before the snow began to fall, after seeing Hearth's confusion towards its purpose. He'd never seen a fireplace before, having asked why burnt logs were being stored behind some metal grate. As soon as Hearth realised how he must've sounded after it was explained to him, he had expected Cassidy would've laughed at his question, but he hadn't. Hearth didn't know how to process Cassidy's kindness, nor his patience. It wasn't something he was familiar with at all, being much more used to the sneers of Psyche and the tauntings of Vaughn. Neither did they give him a place as warm and comfortable to stay in during the winter as Cassidy had; They were too preoccupied caring for themselves, and telling him he didn't need it. He was a crook, they'd say, albeit broken, but that he shouldn't need such amenities to survive. He was no fragile human that would've frozen solid by now. But now he was in Cassidy's care, someone that actually cared about his wellbeing.