

“Speaking of which, isn’t Frederick’s birthday tomorrow?”

It was that sentence leaving Calliope’s mouth that caught the attention of everyone in the room (minus Meredith, per usual. The orange-haired girl’s attention is fully focused on something else and by this point, all of them are used to it). The wizard in question is currently not with them, saying that he has a job that needs to be finished. Perhaps that’s why the brunette decides to bring it up out of nowhere.

Natasha hums, a slight smile tugging at her lips. “Now that you mention it, yes it is. October 31st, if I recall correctly,” she chuckles softly, clasping her hands together. “Ah, it’s always nice to see the youth taking another step in the pages of their life. I can’t wait to see where his journey will take him next,” she continues, the look in her eyes becoming even softer than before. Calliope jumps in the conversation once again, grinning from ear to ear. “Oh, oh! Then, each of us should give him something for presents! I’m sure he will be happy to receive them. After all, he said it himself that he didn’t really receive any kind of gifts during his birthday when he was a child, right?” she asks, tilting her head as she shifts her gaze to the others.

Meredith’s grip on the music box she has been working on tightens slightly, the look in her eyes hardening. If Miyuki, who is sitting across from her notices the slight change in her demeanor, she doesn’t say anything, instead focusing her attention on the object within her grasp.

“Oh, that would be lovely,” Giselle says softly, her eyes sparkling. “I’m sure he will be happy to receive presents from us on his birthday. Especially if it’s from...”

She trails off, her gaze moving towards Meredith. The others follow her gaze, their eyes focusing on the orange-haired witch. Feeling their eyes on her, Meredith lifts her head up, returning their gaze with a glare and a scowl. “What?” she asks, her voice gruff. “Why are you looking at me with those sparkly eyes? It’s unsettling.”

“Is there anything you’re going to give to Frederick for his birthday?” Never one to hold back, Calliope immediately asks. Meredith burrows her eyebrows, the scowl on her face deepens at the question before she returns her attention to the music box in her hands. “No, nothing in particular,” she says. Even without looking at her direction, she can tell that the younger witch’s eyes have widened in disbelief over her answers. “Eh?! And here I thought that your relationship has improved after what happened between you two that time!” she squeaks and Meredith wants the brown-haired witch to shut her mouth right now.

Honestly. She will never understand western wizards and witches’ way of thinking.

She let out a sigh, shooting an annoyed glance in Calliope’s direction. “Just because we have reconciled that time, doesn’t mean I will immediately get along with that tomato head of a brother like I did when we were children. I thought that much was obvious—or did that fact fly over your head? I won’t be surprised if it did, though.”

“Uweeee, Meredith is being really mean again!”

“I mean, she does have a point. I think that fact really did fly over your head.”

“Miyuki’s being mean too! Oh, this is just the worst!”

“...And this is why you western wizards and witches give me a headache whenever I’m talking to any of you.”

Meredith huffs as she tears her gaze away from the others, eyes focusing on the object in her hands once more. “Canticum Planctus,” she utters her spell underneath her breath, watching as the last thing she needs is added to the music box. Once she feels her magic coming from it, a small, barely visible smile appears on her face as she puts it inside the small box before her, securely closing it to ensure that its content will not fall out and get damaged. Letting out a soft exhale, she turns her attention out of the window, staring up at the sky.

Now she needs to wait for a certain someone to return tomorrow to execute her action.

-----

Frederick let out a heavy sigh as he walked down the hallway, one hand moving to take off his head. The job that he did yesterday took much longer to complete than he thought it would and he can only return today after making sure that he doesn’t miss anything else. It’s tiring, but Frederick wouldn’t have it any other way. In a way, it also gives him a certain sense of satisfaction to know that someone needed his help with something, be it humans or other wizards and witches. Just as he is about to reach his room, his beloved sister’s voice rings out in the hallway, dry and humorless, but still somehow managing to sound melodious to his ears.

“Hey, stupid Frederick, think fast.”

As those words reach his ears, Frederick immediately turns around, right on time to see Meredith chucking a small box to his direction. His eye widened slightly, but Frederick wastes no time in catching the box in his hands. Shifting his gaze up to his younger sister, Frederick let a wry smile appear on her face. “Greeting by throwing objects at me now, are we? I say it’s an improvement. It’s better than having you glaring at me and giving me a cold shoulder like you used to do,” he says, a hint of teasing in his voice. Meredith simply rolls her eyes, crossing her arms in front of her chest as she stares him down, clearly not amused by his words. “You’re lucky I didn’t throw that thing at your head. It might be light, but I’m pretty sure it will still hurt if it makes contact with that apple head of yours,” she retorts, huffing.

He laughs, amused before shifting his gaze to the box, curiosity filling him as he wonders about what the content might be. “And what is the reason you give this to me?”

Meredith gives him a look that says “find out by yourself, stupid” before actually answering. “Where’s the fun in giving you the answer immediately? Think about what day today is, and you’ll have the answer. I’ll be going now, bye.”

With a wave of her hand, Meredith turns away and walks away, leaving her brother standing in front of the door to his room, staring intently at her. Her words echo in his mind; “what day today is”? If he’s not mistaken, today is October 31st, which means that today is Halloween, and also —

His birthday.

Realization sinks into Frederick’s mind. Quickly, he threw open the door to his room, shutting it behind him. Putting the box on his desk, he carefully opens it and pulls out the music box that has been placed inside.

Taking a deep breath, he reaches out towards the key and starts winding it.

A melody starts playing from the music box, a melody that causes Frederick’s heart to skip a beat. He recognizes the song, of course he would. It’s the song that he and Meredith had composed years ago, before Frederick lost his right eye and their relationship became fractured for years to come in that incident. Meredith... has finished the song, put it into the music box and gives it to him as a birthday gift. Just the realization alone is enough to cause tears to start forming in his eye. Not tears of sadness, but of happiness.

It means she’s starting to heal. That she has decided to move on from what happened that day. That his little sister, that he continues to love despite everything that has happened, is still holding on to that precious memory like he does. And the thoughts cause Frederick’s heart to feel warm.

The melody from the music box continues to fill the room and Frederick closes his lone eye.

For the first time in an unbearably long time, he feels utterly content.