

Sienna lowered her head a little as she weaved through the crowds, mumbling quick apologies as she bumped into other Aqualoxes.

She normally wasn't one for large celebrations and festivals such as this. She much preferred staying at home, where things were predictable, quiet, and relaxed. Lavender, though, was the opposite - and she couldn't just deny Lavender's invitation.

Lavender lived for these kinds of events. She was always finding every little reason to get together with as many people as she could and celebrate. Some may wonder why Sienna was such good friends with her, if she was so introverted, but Sienna had found that Lavender helped make sure she didn't stay living as a shut-in forever, and she helped Lavender know when it was time to rest and relax. They complimented each other well.

Sienna was already planning on spending today at home, but Lavender had invited her to the festival, saying that she should at *least* stay long enough for the fireworks show. And Sienna knew that she would regret it if she didn't see it, so here she was.

"Ooh! Look! They've got the hand pie stalls set up!"

Sienna had to pick up her pace as Lavender suddenly bolted, zigzagging through all the other Aqualoxes like it was second nature to her. Soon enough, she caught up to her, with Lavender already leaning on the counter.

"Two firestarter pies, please!" She chirped, placing some opals down.

"Oh, um—" Sienna began to rifle through her bag, looking for her own opals. "One for me as well, pl—"

She was cut off by Lavender placing a paw on hers, stopping her from setting her opals on the counter. "Hey. Second one's for you, silly."

"O—oh," Sienna mumbled, closing her bag again.

The shopkeep accepted Lavender's opals with a smile, handing the two of them two fresh hand pies, both wrapped in a napkin for ease of holding. As soon as she got hers, Lavender dug in, eating it quicker than Sienna could even get a good look at her own.

The hand pie had such intricate patterns cut into it - stars that were simple enough to be carved into such a small pie, but still exceedingly fancy.

She took her first nibble at the corner of it, as Lavender wiped the crumbs off her face.

As soon as the flavor hit, she could feel her eyes begin to water. She quickly gulped the piece down to stop the spiciness from growing. Ouch!

Lavender was blatantly trying to hold back a snicker. "Didn't you know they were hot...? They're called *firestarter pies*, Sienna!"

Sienna just coughed, handing the rest of her pie to Lavender. "Water. Please."

Lavender pocketed Sienna's pie for later, and then waved a paw for her to follow, leading her over to a different stall - this one serving beverages.

"You know, you'd think that they made the hand pies spicy this year because it's the year of the dragon—" She rambled, as she bought a drink, "—But actually, they

make them this spicy every New Year! They're just more profitable this year, so they make sure to make lots more to serve— so really, it kind of became a tradition because of the people, and not the vendors! Isn't that neat?"

Sienna made a vague affirmative grunt as she reached across the counter to grab her drink, gulping it down as fast as she could— so fast she had to cough again.

Lavender smiled. "Feeling better? I can have the rest of yours if you don't want it."

"Please, take the rest," Sienna said, taking a moment to catch her breath. "Too spicy. Too much."

"If you say so!" Lavender chirped. "Oh— I think it's almost time for the fireworks show! We should go get seats before all the good spots are gone!"

Sienna nodded in affirmation, as she and Lavender ran over to the designated picnic area that was set aside for the fireworks show. She was getting a little better at getting through the crowds without bumping into anyone... maybe a bit of Lavender had finally rubbed off on her.

"Alright," Lavender held her head high as she spoke, "We need to choose a spot where we can see the fireworks clearly, but also someplace comfy! No pokey sticks on the ground or anything. Which means, we should—"

"What about here?"

Sienna pointed over at a patch of grass - just in line of view, easily looked over since it didn't have any shade from nearby trees. That wouldn't matter much during the show, though, wouldn't it?

"Yes!" Lavender beamed, "Exactly! Let's get it before someone else does!"

The two of them ran over to their newly claimed viewing spot, ready to watch as the fireworks bid farewell to the old year, and ushered in the new.