

The chime of the apartment doorbell dragged Akari from her slumber. Her body jerked in response, causing her to flail as she slipped off the couch. A groan left her as she hit the ground with a thud.

She simply lay there for a few moments and unfortunately the doorbell rang again.

"Coming," Akari called out in response as she rolled over to stand. Once up she sluggishly made her way to the door and with a click she opened the door.

Svetla stood outside the door, a distraught expression upon her face. "Akari!" Without waiting for the CCCat to let her in, the Gravent pushed through, squeezing between the doorway and Akari's body until she was inside the apartment and now stood in the center of it.

"Akari-" she started, only to be silenced by the CCCat as she raised her clawed hand. "Svetla, you just stormed into my house at-" she peered over at the digital clock that rested on the table, "nine am. That's far too early."

"But this is important!"

Akari made a sound equal to a sigh as she shook her head, defeat now present in her body language as her shoulders slumped. Her eye flickered to the clock once again before settling on Svetla. "Fine, what is it?"

"It's Eden's birthday!" Svetla announced as she started to jump up and down in excitement. In response to such an action Akari lunged forward to put her hands on her shoulders, "apartment, remember?" She said as she gestured to the floor and then the ceiling, "Skire above and below us."

"Oh- I'm sorry- but! Eden's birthday! It's super important! We need to throw a surprise party for her!"

Akari fell silent for a moment, just staring at the Gravent.

Svetla continued to look at her, a hopeful expression upon her face.

They stayed like this for quite a few moments before Akari spoke again, "...fine, fine. Let's go downtown." Immediately a wide smile formed across Svetla's face, but she remained quiet. "When are you throwing the party? And do you know what it is you're going to get her?"

Excitement seemed to course through her as she once more jumped up and down, though it was only once. "I'll tell you on the way! Let's go now!" And with that, Svetla left the apartment, disappearing behind the wall but the sound of her footsteps indicated she didn't go far.

Akari turned to face the door before rolling her neck as a sigh left her. She stepped forward, grabbing the key to her apartment before she exited. "Alright, where are we going first Svetla?"

"The markets that I saw on my way here, they're between here and the portal."

And with that the duo descended the staircase of the apartments, they passed by a few skires on the way out but there was barely a glance exchanged between them.

They approached the front entrance of the building, exiting it with nary a sound or word exchanged between them until they were outside.

"So, on my way here I passed a stall owned by a very sweet CCCat who sold handmade plushies and I think we should get one for Eden."

"I see. Do you know which one you want to get her?" Akari spared a glance to the Gravent, who seemed to be walking at a restrained pace; like she wanted to go faster than the pace they were currently doing.

"Yes! I saw a cat plush that reminds me of Eden, so I want to get that for her."

"Alright, that'll work. Are you getting her cake?" The duo weaved between a crowd as they crossed the street.

"Yeah! Of course! Getting her a chocolate cake from the bakery next. The one near the portal."

Akari's head tilts, "huh, there's a bakery beside the portal?" Her vision rests on Svetla who was walking beside her. "But now I'm curious, how come you've never made a portal to the lighthouse?"

Svetla's expression shifted to one of embarrassment, "so... I tried but it didn't go well. It wouldn't turn on at all and I wasn't sure what I did wrong." She rubbed the back of her neck, "but! I should try it again now that I'm not as busy."

"Maybe," Akari gave a slight head shake.

The Gravent's attention turned back to Akari as she spoke, "have you ever tried to make a portal?"

"I have and after that I'd rather not try again. It ended with a mishap that resulted in my fur being a hot pink instead of its usual white." A groan left her, "and I'd rather not have that happen again."

"Your fur turned pink?!" Svetla gasped, a mixture of amusement and shock visible upon her face.

“For a few days, yes.”

“I can see why you haven’t tried making another portal then,” Svetla responds, her voice indicating a smile.

There was a brief moment of comfortable silence between them as they walked, simply taking the scenery and enjoying the moment.

Mid sweep the area, Svetla piped up, excitement present in her tone, “that’s the stall just over there! Let’s go buy that plush!” Without waiting for a reply she sprinted off, leaving Akari standing there in surprise.

It took the CCCat a few moments to recover, with her shaking her head to drag herself from her stupor. She hurried after the Gravent who already appeared to be standing in line at the stall.

Once Akari arrived at Svetla’s side, the Gravent appeared to be already holding the black cat plushie in her hands. “That one?”

“Yes!” Svetla held it up towards her, “see? Doesn’t it remind you of her?”

Akari’s head tilted as she took in the appearance of the plush, there was a brief moment of silence as she pondered a response.

“..yes, unfortunately it does. You picked a good one.”

A wide grin formed across Svetla’s face, “I’m glad you agree!”

She eagerly stepped forward as they moved to the front of the line. She placed the plushie down on the counter as she hurriedly reached for crowns to pay for it.

Akari turned away as the exchange began, already tuned out to the conversation. Her vision swept across the surrounding area, taking in all the sights; all the Skire, all the stalls and goods that decorated them. The general atmosphere was busy, but cheerful.

“-ari? Akari? Hey!”

The CCCat’s head jerked towards the source of the voice, gaze meeting the sight of Svetla who held the plush tightly against her chest. “That was quick.”

“We can go now— actually, we should head to the portal. I need to get the cake and get this wrapped up ready for tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow?” Akari seemed surprised.

“Oh! I forgot to tell you! The party is tomorrow night!” Svetla wore a sheepish expression.

Akari simply fell silent for a few moments before replying, "alright, I'll be there. But shouldn't you buy the cake tomorrow?"

"...that's probably a good idea. Okay. Let's go back to the portal and I'll be back tomorrow for the cake."

Once more Akari shook her head, "this portal's this way." And with that she began to walk off.

The duo set off, this time the comfortable silence remained until they arrived at their destination. They arrived just outside the portal, its exterior wore a coat of light blue colouration and was decorated with drawings of oceanic creatures, seaweed, coral and even a lighthouse.

"Well, we're here." Akari simply stated as she turned around to face Svetla.

She nodded in response, "you know, this portal is super pretty. And it means a lot to me. Connecting your city to my town."

Akari gave a pause, "...if you're procrastinating going back then you better just go through it," there was a smirk on her face, "you'll be back tomorrow and I'll see you tomorrow at the party. By the way, what time does it start at?"

"Uh.. about five pm," Svetla nods, "I'll have finger food and stuff but it's going to be a party with just us."

"Alright, I'll see you then." The CCCat took a few steps back.

Understanding the message Svetla moves to the portal, stepping towards its center; it was a mass of wavy turquoise coloured magic.

"See you tomorrow!" She called out as she turned around to wave at the CCCat, the Gravent's expression shifted to one of slight surprise when Akari returned the gesture.

And then she stepped through, the brightness of the magic overwhelmed her eyes, causing her to close them as she entered. There was a sensation akin to that of her stomach dropping, much like being in an elevator and then suddenly a lightness and then nothing. Quiet, pause, and then a breeze against her face, a gentle light and then the smell of the ocean.

Her eyes opened to reveal her lighthouse resting off in the distance and the town a short walk to her side.

She was back home.