

Dancing Arrows

A winter sunrise along the coast arrives slowly, with a restrained, crystalline quiet, as though the morning is careful not to disturb the cold. The horizon glows first—an ember-thin line of pale orange and blush that bleeds upward into steel blue and faint lavender. Clouds hang low and spare, their edges catching light like frosted glass, tinted softly with rose and gold. The ocean reflects it all in fractured shards, each wave folding the cold sky into itself and scattering muted color across the dark water.

The air is sharp and clean, carrying the bite of salt and kelp, and the sand holds a firm, icy chill beneath each step. Breath fogs faintly in the stillness. Gulls cry somewhere distant, their calls thin and hollow against the vastness, while the tide exhales in slow, steady pulls. When the sun finally crests the water, its light feels fragile but precise, gilding wet stones and riming driftwood with silver warmth, revealing the coast in a quiet, winter-bound promise of day. On the quiet stretch of beach, Sonata can be found in gentle yoga stretches, her petite figure a calm contrast to the restless sea. She moves with unhurried precision, easing from one pose into the next, her breath visible in faint, ghostly plumes. Bare feet sink into cold, compact sand, toes grounding as she holds a steady balance against the chill wind despite her disdain of the biting cold. Her clothes ripple softly with each shift of posture, fabric catching the light as the sun climbs higher.

She pauses in stillness, arms raised, spine lengthened, as if offering herself to the morning. The cold reddens her fingertips and cheeks, yet her focus remains inward, calm and deliberate. Each inhale gathers the sharp, salted air; each exhale releases it slowly, measured and controlled. For a moment, she seems rooted like the driftwood nearby—unmoving, patient—while the world continues around her, waves folding onto the shore and light steadily claiming the winter coast.

A short distance away, Freyja sits crisscrossed in the sand, her back to the ocean, shoulders relaxed despite the cold. The tide reaching her in quiet surges, icy waves splashing against her spine and soaking the hem of her clothes before retreating again. She does not flinch; instead, she leaned slightly into the shock, accepting the cold as it came. Mismatched colored eyes remained closed for the time while with each splash she breathes steadily, letting the sea mark her presence there—grounded, enduring.

“We’re sparr’n.” Freyja’s voice was the first to break the silence through the white noise of the ocean. The twinned Seeker stood as icy white-capped waves rolled against her toned calves. She appeared unbothered, combing back damp navy and mint-highlighted curls up into a messier version of her usual ponytail.

There was a drawn sigh that escaped the smaller Raen, pale golden eyes rolling as it had been the millionth time this morning Freyja had brought it up. For the millionth time, Sonata declined, stressing that every other morning was her regular yoga routine. "I've already stated I do not want to, Frey, let it be." The Raen exhaled through her nose as she eases from the Firefly pose to a rest and moves gracefully into an upward Rooster pose. Scaled tail tucking against her hip as she lets out a trained breath. "Spar with your sister, or really any one of the Raven's would likely take the stage with you if you'd ask."

A whistle sounded, wood immediately splintered reflexively between the Raen's palm where one of Freyja's arrows were caught all the while she remained in pose. The arrow split in two, vertically. Golden eyes opened, briefly flashing into an agitated sharp copper. The archer on the other hand, gave an impish, devious grin while emanating her gremlin energy. She knew exactly what she was doing, barring consequence.

"I didn' stutter, Sparkles." Freyja iterated, twirling another arrow between her fingers, treating it like a baton. Her elongated fluffy tail flicking from side to side as she watched the smaller Raen unravel from her pose to a stand. Sonata sighed, combing back silver and lilac curls behind her horn. The caught arrow in her hand *dissolved* into a fine ash. Freyja's ear flicked, watching her arrow disappear as if it never even existed. Her curiosity drawn with ease like a moth to a flame. "I swear you and your sister never take 'no' for an answer." The Raen huffed. "I said I don't—"

Another arrow zipped by Sonata, dodging it by a hairline as Freyja cut her off mid-sentence. A few strands of her hair had been clipped, falling to the sand at her feet. "Freyja – !"

"What? Pissed off yet? Good." Ears flicked, her tail mimicked the motions. However, she blinked and Sonata was suddenly... not there and at the same time, she *was*. Freyja noticed the shift in the wind too. Her curiosity and intrigue growing more.

"Fine." there was a curt hiss in the Raen's tone though it came first in a whisper across Freyja's cheek before anything else. Sonata appeared promptly behind the archer *after*. A fine red line drew across the Seekers cheek just as she appeared – a warning. "Let's dance then." She disappeared again, reappearing within a blink in front of Freyja. The wind: it stopped. Suddenly, the seeker was launched several yalms backwards. Her shoulders squaring against one of the lazy boulders lounging along the coastline with an audible grunt before she slumped forward with her knees in the sand. *She didn't lift a finger*—and that wasn't the winds doing either. Dual colored eyes were wide, while she herself briefly stunned coming to this realization as she looked up see Sonata hadn't so much as flinched while she was sent flying backwards. The only change was the small trail of red dripping down from her nose. *That was going to hurt in the morning*. Freyja huffed as she managed to her feet then. An ear flicked as the wind raked against her then pulling in a direction as if it was moving *towards* the Raen with intention.

Sonata's chakrams appeared at either side of her in a way of tiny particles were coming and forming together like pieces of an airborne puzzle – the archer watched as the bladed ends shined in the early morning sunlight while they became whole.

A *trained* breath exhaled from the smaller Raen while her stance shifted: one foot dragging along the sand as her arms move as if guided by water rather than muscle, rising and falling in seamless arcs that leave no clear beginning or end. Each motion flows into the next, wrists soft, elbows yielding, fingers trailing the air like brushstrokes. The movement appears unforced and continuous, a quiet conversation between breath and balance, as though she is shaping the space around her rather than moving through it. In that fluidity, her arms become extensions of nature's music itself—graceful, deliberate, and endlessly unfolding. The chakrams parted from her palms though instead of falling, they remained airborne, swirling and spinning as if coaxed by the wind itself.

Freyja *grinned* that dangerous feline grin of hers when she was up to mischief. “So ya *can* get angry. *Cute*.” There was intentional taunting in the archers tone when she sneered at the Raen. Poking and prodding A whistle sounding shortly after sending three more arrows flying in Sonata's direction. Two were splintered in one swing of her left chakram, the third skirted off the scales of her right cheek. Copper-stained eyes narrow though her expression appears unusual and rather *dangerously* calm. For a moment: Freyja could have sworn she noticed the slight darkening of Sonata's eyes. Unusual and almost *alien* from the three primary mood-metals they'd change. *This is new...* though with very little time to dwell on the new discovery further, the duo continued to engage on this impromptu spar:

It unfolds like a study in contrast, tension drawn tight between stillness and motion. The archer stands grounded and deliberate, posture aligned as if an invisible bowstring runs through her spine. Every movement is economical—steps placed with care, shoulders steady, gaze sharp and unwavering as she tracks her opponent. Even unarmed, her presence suggests precision, each shift of weight measured like the breath before a shot.

Sonata never truly stops moving. She circles in fluid arcs, feet gliding as though the ground offers less resistance beneath her. Her arms sweep and coil not merely to strike, but to *shape* the space between them. With each turn, the air seems to hesitate, responding a fraction too late—or too soon—as if nudged by an unseen intention. Feints blur into something harder to read, and her timing feels uncanny, arriving just ahead of expectation. When they engage, the exchange becomes subtly disorienting. The archer advances in clean, decisive lines, yet her strikes meet evasions that feel preemptive, as though Sonata has already stepped through the moment before it arrives. The Auri dancer yields and redirects with impossible ease, slipping past danger by instinct alone, landing light, precise counters that seem guided by more than sight. Focus tightens, breaths synchronize, and the space between them grows charged—dense with anticipation, with something unspoken pressing against perception.

Neither style overwhelms the other; instead, they sharpen into tension. The archer begins to hesitate, adjusting not just to motion but to the feeling of being *read*. Sonata grows quieter in her movements, eyes distant, expression serene, as if listening inwardly while her body responds outward. The sparring remains disciplined and controlled, but beneath its elegance lies a deeper current—one that bends awareness, where intent travels faster than muscle, and movement follows a knowing that never quite reveals its source.

Freyja trilled another whistle coaxing a flurry of arrows to hover around her; all of them aiming towards Sonata. “Why ya hold’n back, Sparkles?” Sweat beading down the Seekers temples though it seemed as though they were both breathing with steady ease. Freyja’s left shoulder was bruised and she had a sizeable slice drawn from her nose down her right cheek.

The wind shuddered, as if reacting *for* the Raen in her stead. “I’m not.” The answer came too quick. Too intentional. Freyja noticed. Her arms crossing over her breasts as she tilted her head slightly with a flick of her ear.

“You suck at lying.”

A sharper whistle trilled. One arrow, another... a third and a fourth zipped and glided through the air as if they were just released from their bow. Sonata dodged the first and second with a pirouette. The third with an acrobatic backwards leap. The fourth slid along her palm, slicing through flesh before it dissolved and letting scarlet drip down her fingertips to the sand. The calm focus in her expression strains, eyes narrowing, jaw setting—not with anger alone, but with the effort of holding something back.

Then she stops moving altogether.

The sudden stillness is jarring. Her arms lift slightly, fingers splayed, and the space between her and Freyja feels abruptly dense, heavy, like pressure building before a storm breaks. The Seeker senses it an instant too late—an overwhelming force surges outward without warning, invisible yet unmistakable. It strikes like a concussive wave, not of impact but of intent, slamming into balance and breath at once. Sand skids beneath feet, air tears from lungs, and the world lurches as if shoved by an unseen hand.

When the force dissipates, silence rushes in to replace it. The dancer lowers her arms slowly, breath unsteady now, the earlier serenity fractured by agitation and release. Freyja buckled over on her knees, shaken but aware, eyes locked on Sonata with new understanding. Whereas Sonata stood there – wide-eyed like a deer caught in headlights, stunned by her own action. Whatever unspoken current had flowed beneath the sparring has surfaced at last—raw, powerful, and no longer entirely contained.

“What—...?” the question fell in an unfinished breath as the Raen’s gaze trailed to her hands. Her vision blurring slightly.

“Whoooooaaaa.” Freyja exhaled in a groaned awe. Mismatched eyes wide in awestruck. Never mind the fact that she just had the wind essentially punched out of her. “That’s... so COOL! SPARKLESWHERE THE FUCK DID THAT COME FROM?!” The seeker was scrambling to her feet. She coughed a few times, but did her best to shrug off the pain because that was the *least* exciting part in the moment. Her ears rolled forward, pinning up right as her tail twitched with wild curiosity. “Knew ya had it in ya. Sparkles. Anyone else know ‘bout that? Damn that’s gonna leave a mark in the mornin—”

Meanwhile: Sonata was *dumbfounded*. Had that happened before? *My head hurts..* A strained breath exhaled. *No. I don’t remember this.* She could hear Freyja’s excitement but at the same time, she couldn’t comprehend the words the archer was saying. “ – fine tune that and could really do some damage on a hunt or – nah that’d take the fun outta hunt’n—”

“Freyja. Stop. *Please.*”

The seeker blinked, her expression blank as she looked to Raen who was *visibly* shaken by her own actions. As if she couldn’t comprehend *what* exactly just happened. Navy and mint colored tail flicked once as she took a step forward only to feel her feet come to an abrupt halt. Her muscles tensing – and it wasn’t her own will stopping her.

“Don’t.” the Raen’s voice hissed in a quiet warning. Her eyes were weathered silver but flickered again. *Okay not goin’ completely crazy then Cool.* Freyja concluded quietly. Her ears tilted back slightly. “Sparkles –” Freyja started though Sonata lifted her hand in a silent objection. Joints began to feel a little looser. *Okay that’s... I should be concerned, right?*

“I’m... I’m going to get cleaned up and then I’m going home.” Sonata wasn’t sure if she was talking to Freyja or trying to ground herself in that moment. “We’re going to act like *none of this* happened.” She nodded, running a hand through the silver and lilac highlighted hair. “*Ugh.* My head...” Navy brows furrowed slightly as she watched the smaller Raen. She’d seen her get worked up before, fret rather easily over little things that involved the Rest or worry over those she cared for, herself included. *Ahh... I think I fucked up somewhere...* the seeker bit the inside of her cheek. Before she could even begin to counter Sonata’s words; she had vanished – blinking out of the setting entirely. Eyes narrowing as she let out a soft pained huff. She’d been doing that *a lot* lately.

“... I *thiiiiink*.... I *might* get my ass chewed out later and not in the fun way.” she mumbled under her breath. She rolled her shoulders, immediately regretting it feeling the sharp sting in her left shoulder. “!@#\$%^” she growled incoherently, “Yep. Yep. I deserved that.”