Celeste III: Shards and Love-related Shenanigans

[WOOL-208] - **WORD COUNT: 715**

+700 words - 7 shards
Prompt Entry - 4 shards
Extra Woolyne [Vladimir] - 2 shards
Monthly Prompt - 1 ethereal shard
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Total: 13 shards + 1 ethereal shard

The crowd was restless but mirthful, hurrying to and from the next eye-catching attraction. Ribbons, crystals, and pearls adorned more than one woolyne; they hung from their hair, their ears, dangled around their necks, and clung to their clothes. There were at least a hundred different charms that had been sold today alone. Being around this many woolyne was making Celeste feel ill- repulsed even- but whatever it took to get those shards.

Across from her sat Vladimir, a woolyne with more silver dripping from his tongue than his fur, who was also carefully helping her count out the shards from today's sales. Celeste had seen a large opportunity for sales of “love” charms during the festival season but knew she couldn’t properly capitalize on the opportunity alone. She had reached out to a contact from the Thieves Guild who had pointed her in Vladimir’s direction- the somewhat morally dubious woolyne ran a circus with vendors and tents and seemed to be open to helping her locate cheap production labor for a small cut of her profits.

“*60/40 split- he calls it small,”* Celeste internally scoffed as she helped neatly sort the shards they collected. Both of them were participating in the shard counting for… transparency sake. Afterall, one should never just trust someone they were referred to by a thief, just like how one should never trust someone with an introduction letter from a thief. Still- over the week the two woolyne had spent working together they had developed a rather guarded but joking report. One would take a pot- shot the other would jab back.

“I still can’t believe you sold them as pearls-” Vladimir shook his head, the false pearl halves they had made from lyss and the leftover husks of shellfish- cheap ordinary things that any woolyne could acquire or likely replicated with enough time and patience. Thankfully the holiday was short enough they weren’t likely to see anyone who could figure it out quickly enough to really damage their profits.

“Pearl-like Vladimir,” Celeste replied without looking up “They may sound similar, but are legally distinct.” Vladimir rolled his eyes, they both knew this was a quick grab for cash on both their parts. His eyes landed on one of the few charms they had yet to sell today.

“Maybe purchase one of these and get lucky this valentines day season.” He remarked holding it up to see how it sparkled in the light. It wasn’t like he wasn’t interested but it was a bit tricky to meet someone who could work around his particular lifestyle and didn’t have a habit of getting under hoof while courting him.

“Oh I think it’s gonna take more than a lucky charm to get a date” Celeste teased. She had seen several different woolyne- men and women alike who had expressed interest in the circus master only to get shut down by the golden-horned woolyne.

“What’s that supposed to mean?!” he gasped dramatically, feigning ignorance.

“It means if you want fish to keep biting maybe don't put the other fish nibbling at the line down right in front of them.”

“I will have you know I’ve been described as handsome and incredibly charming- when I want to be.”

“Mhmm, I’ve only seen that when shards are involved. I’ve yet to see these skills in practice outside your business affairs.” Vladimir appeared personally offended by that remark.

“I can charm the boots off a cowboy!”

“But can you charm your way into his heart?” The indignant Vladimir paused counting.

“Damn right I could- I’ll even prove it.” he slammed his hand down on the table they had been counting on and looked around. “Look over there- at the giant muscular-looking woolyne. Do you see them?”

“Yeah- the big tan guy, right? Blue hair?” she could see him out of the corner of her eyes. Celeste had been watching him for a minute, mostly because he had been hanging around the area for an unnaturally long time.

“I’m gonna get a gembond festival date out of him and charm the shards right out of his pockets before the end of this festival!” Vladimir declared boldly.

“Yeah? You sure about that?” Celeste asked, brow arched- unaware of the romantic train wreck she was setting in motion…