

An overwhelming nostalgia washes over Ptolemy, but he leaves it behind. Harper wasn't here last year, it is pointless to show him something so tacky and amateur.

"First, I want to give you a gift."

Ptolemy, lanky and green, shuffles around under his work space and fishes out a wrapped box. The newspaper is yellowed and frayed along the edges, with a few stains where coffee cups once sat idle, and warping where the sweat of iced tea, mango lemonade, and pitchers of water seeped into the paper.

Some of the comic pages are colored, and the whole thing is wrapped with a neat line of twine. A gift tag lays folded against the box, and a thick layer of dust coats the corner where the box was exposed.

"I made you a sweater," Ptolemy says. "I was supposed to send it to you for Aurora's Dawn, but they stopped taking mail from the island for a while. I don't know if it will still fit."

Harper accepts the box and opens it, peeling the newspaper off to find a plain brown box underneath. Within, a bright green and white sweater lay folded in wrinkled tissue paper dotted with Peri-Peri-kun polkadots. He smiles despite his melancholy.

The sweater is ugly and the pattern is uneven, but it is festive, and Harper appreciates it even though he can tell it will be a bit small. "I'll wear it to the costume party."

Ptolemy crinkles his nose, exposing his teeth, and his striped tendrils curl in confusion. "But this is not a Long Night costume. It's an Aurora's Dawn sweater. I don't think it counts."

"Then I am one of Fleece's Helpers," Harper responds adamantly. "It'll totally count. I'll put a dumb hat on too."

“I guess so,” Ptolemy says. He doesn’t want to argue about it.