

"Once upon a time there was a great and terrible storm, one that washed over all the world like a plague" The motherly tone rung in her ears as the young girl eagerly anticipated her favorite part.

"And when hope was lost and humanity faced it's bitter end, only twelve souls were left in the whole wide world."

Wide arcs of her arms and playful crescendos of her voice made every moment breathtaking, even suspenseful to young Yuliste. This being in spite of the fact that she had every single solitary word memorized to heart.

Mother paused the reading for a moment noticing the excitement painted across her face.

"Why don't you go ahead and tell the next part Yuli."

Yuli leaped to her feet practically knocking down the regal lantern on her nightstand in the process. The flickering of light against the soft painted walls doing little to deter her pure determination.

"The last of the humans stood bravely and faced the storm!"

Yuli put on her bravest face placing a hand to her heart as her imagination took root, placing her in front of the storm.

"And then?" Mother added with an equal dutiful tone placing herself too within the realm of imagination.

As Yuli attempted to gather her words the door to the young girl's room slammed open with a childish glee to top them all.

"--And then papa finished his paperwork and saved the day! Quelling the storm and saving the world." He rushed in to embrace Yuli in a swirling hug despite it being a bedtime story.

Her mother gave off a look of mild amusement before letting her demure facade crumble.

"Raste, must you always present yourself as such a--" She struggled for a moment searching for an appropriate word but instead presenting a deadly opening. He closed the distance like a shadow and kissed mother's hand in a gentle but sly manner.

"Ah-ah! I will have to beg your pardon my dear Lily but such complaints will have to wait for the

story's end. You wouldn't want to delay her favorite telling would you?"

He shot her a knowing smile, as she rolled her eyes fading to a subtle pout signaling, if nothing else, his complete and utter victory. Yuli now found herself released from her father's warm embrace and sitting with a captive audience looking on with great anticipation.

"The humans made a wish, a wish so great that nobody had ever wished quite as special as they did right then. "

She paused mid way, exhausting her lung capacity as she gasped in a deep breath eager to continue. The flickering of the lamp casted shadows, of which danced alongside her words. Catching a quick glance she noticed her father to be the culprit, a hint of magic still whispering through the air.

This was it, her favorite part had finally arrived!

"Then the storm called back to them, the stars themselves heard their wishes and returned their words."

The girl watching intently as the small, now defined shadows of the humans pointed to the great serpent made from stars.

"A wish? A wish is much to much tiny creatures." The serpent bellowed.
"However, I will grant it, on one condition. "

Father slyly had stolen the line, acting out a booming voice worthy of a star snake. Despite opening her mouth to protest she simply had too much excitement for what came next.

"Please oh stars ask of us anything just grant our one true wish." Yuli continued placing her hands together to match the silhouette of a young girl who mimicked her plea.

"Then share thine world with my kin, the Felfri, and I shall promise you my eternal favor."

Her mother this time wrought her revenge by stealing the words father loved the most, though Yuli couldn't help but find it funny that mother who was a Felfri like herself said the line to the humans, when father was singled out as the only human in the room.

"But..." Father retorted with a sad expression, going one step beyond mere acting.

"Should you humans break the promise and selfishly take the world as your own. "

His expression turned grim sending chills down her spine. It almost felt as though for a moment, father had become the star snake and she a human.

"A curse beyond your wildest dreams will befall you, A curse not even I can take back."

The ominous feeling beyond the story now painted itself on both parents faces, drawing with it a mixture of fear and sadness as the sky serpent stared. The moment drew to its end as her father and mother glanced at each other with weak smiles before placing one hand atop the other.

"As proof of our promise this day, I will grant you twelve boons, twelve pieces of myself, each a symbol belonging to you who have suffered."

Her father presented the scene with a dutiful voice accompanied by a myriad of colored books descending to the humans who lived in the wall. Even mother was captivated like a little girl causing Yuli to bounce with excitement.

With glistening eyes she looked from the wall to her parents faces eagerly until the inevitable words broke the silence.

"Yuli would you like to--" Father attempted to ask.

"Yes!!" Yuli's excitement cut the words down moments before they had a chance to finish.

Calming herself she opened her mouth one more time.

"With the promise sealed the very first spell came to be, the great divide from the darkness. The sun was born!" She splayed her arms to the sides making as large as gesture as she could before finishing with bow.

A small but gutsy applause filled the air as she soaked in the atmosphere. Even the shadows bowing for their part in the play before melting, fading into the normal sight of torchlight against the walls.

"Bravo my love. " Her mother said pulling the covers from the bed allowing her a chance to slip beneath, which she did exuberantly.

"I would expect nothing less of my daughter. A spectacular display!" Father said with his childish pride while tucking the big fluffy blanket over her to combat the growing cold of the night.

Father stood up and waved his hand at the lamp dismissing the light from it altogether. Mother got up as well and faced her who now lay snuggled in the bedding. A kiss to the forehead, and then another, and the exhaustion of her day finally hit her.

" I love you more than the brightest stars above. Goodnight my sweet, and for you sweet dreams." Mother whispered gently tickling her ear.

" And what a tomorrow it shall be! I hope you haven't forgotten. Goodnight my princess I love you as the stars above." Father said with a gentle caring tone.

Her body felt light as a feather as the sweet lull of crickets and gentle sounds of the night nearly ferried her to the beautiful land beneath her heavy eyelids.

"Goodnight Mama, Papa. I love you both like the stars in the sky." Yuli said as she always had, drifting off through the murmurs into the loving caress of true sleep.