

Short Story 'Time'

Von -Yui-san-

"Its tradition in our family, that if you find a partner, that you will get..gifts."

"A partner? Like a boyfriend, or a girlfriend?"

"No, a partner is different. While with a boy or girlfriend you may share love, with a partner you share your life."

"Uh. Okay."

He smiles and leans further back.

"So if you find a partner to share your life with, or even only a part of your life, then the rest of the family gives you gifts. Special presents. They represent the rest of the family, they represent the giver and the traits that branch of the family wants to share with you.

"So today you will get your first present.", he says, holding a hand behind his back, fingering a pocket of his cloak.

"The first one usually is from the newest family member. In this case its from Yule."

"Yules a clockmaker.", she interrupts.

He nods. "Yes."

"So it's a clock?"

"Yeah." He withdraws a small case, handing it to her.

She opens it with delicate hands. A matte bronze pocket watch twinkles in the sunlight.

"Why is it a pocket watch?", she asks, fingers gliding over the details of it.

"Oh." He grins. "One of you has to carry it. You will have to decide which one of you will it be." He tugs his own pocket watch free from his pants. "In our relationship it was chosen to be me.

You must always have it on your person, never loose it and never give it away." He stashes his away again.

"And if, by any circumstances, you decide to leave the life of the other, part ways - which is nothing bad, mind you - you will have to give it to the other."

"Why?" She asks, tugging a stray strand of hair behind her ear.

"Well, because then, you hand over the time you shared. You give that part of your life to your significant other."

"How romantic.", her little sister whispers, leaning over the back of the couch.

She holds the watch to her ear, trying to listen to its ticking. "It's not working."

"Not yet." He says. "It's jammed right now. Before I leave I will adjust it, making it beat with your hearts."

"Why is it you anyway? Why not Yule?"

He sighs, slowly shaking his head.

"That's the other part of the tradition. The one to hand over the watch, is the last person of the family that has jammed theirs once again."

"Again?" Her sister pipes up.

"Yes." He agrees. "You see. If you decide to marry, the moment you ask the question, or just after it, you jam your watch again. Making it stop. To remember this precious moment.

Look at mine." He says, pulling it out again. "The glass is fractured, it won't move ever again. Keeping its fingers on the time we agreed to share our lives forever."

"What if the marriage doesn't work?"

"If that's the case...Or if..one of the partner dies - of old age we hope - and you have children, then your youngest will get it."

"Why the youngest?"

"Easy." He smiles again. A warm, happy smile. "Because the youngest has spend the least time with its parents, right?"

"Yes." Both agree.

"See...and if. If there aren't any children involved, then you give it to the person you trust most."

"So, if you die one day, your kids will get it? Since its already jammed?"

"Correct. So that they can remember."

She smiles this time, watching how the rays of the sun reflect off it.

"I like this tradition."

He chuckles.

"Me too." A sad smile flitters across his face. "Because when I'm away-"

"Which you're often."

"Which is quite often, then I have my wife with me. I can hear her heart beat."

She frowns.

"But your watch doesn't work anymore."

He rubs a thumb across its polished surface.

"It's not the ticking, Lightning. It's her love, that's conserved in it. Our shared life." He stands, taking her pocket watch, adjusting the little mechanic wheels in it, making it tick. "It's the time she gave to me."