

# Nowhereverse Tales



#21

AGES **13+**



wndfx-11nk/hatxx

We exist in our space and time... and we are not alone. Beyond our world lies numerous others with their own histories and biologies. And between them all, where the walls grow thin and possibility seems endless, there is a lighthouse, sitting in the space between spaces.

Welcome, travelers and castaways alike, to **Nowhere**.

## In this issue

*It's one thing to say that you've changed. To say that you're on a new path, turned over a new leaf. To want to be someone new, not the person you've been.*

*It's another thing entirely to do it. To prove with your actions. And when the only actions you can see are your own thoughts, it can be hard to know that you're changing.*

*When we last saw Celeste, she was finding a new purpose after having her previous worldview completely shattered. Now, she's on her way to find Eutychia, one-third of a trio of beings mentally connected across worlds and desperate, after over ten years of knowing each other, to be together...*

—Ronyo

### Finding Healing

Celeste begins her search in the agrarian countryside in her own world, looking for a faun in a unique situation.

**Rated Teen:** brief coarse language, child neglect mentioned

### The First Sign

You, Red, and Green see a new aspect to your connection.

**Rated General:** foreign thoughts

## Ask the Lighthouse

*Fang of the Mountain—*

*Do you have any theories as to why/how you became a chirper? Or did you just suddenly wake up as one with nothing unusual happening beforehand?*

—Coda

No theories, not really. I mean, where do you even begin to figure out something like this? One minute I'm walking back to my car from McDonald's, the next my wings are spread wide trying to bring myself down to the ground safely. Last thing I remember seeing is my vision getting blurry and weirdly colorful around the edges.

First I thought someone had slipped something into my coffee. Then I thought maybe it was a dream.

Then I had to wonder if everything else—being human—was the dream...

Ask your question at [wndfx.link/ask](https://wndfx.link/ask)

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The moment hangs heavy in your minds, the three of you fully focused on this. Red steps forward and holds out their hand. Tentatively, their fingers brush the glyph.

The construct disappears. In its place is a faint miasma of color spreading out across the field. Several bands curl back towards the house, others towards the town, and some fade off into another distance. But your attention is immediately drawn to two bright strands rising into the sky before curling off at some impossible angle, one a bright purple, the other yellow.

Green immediately understands, and they flood your bond with mirth and awe: red and green make yellow; red and blue make magenta.

Red is just staring, jaw hanging open. "It's you," they say.

"What do you see?" Celeste says. Out of the corner of Red's eyes you see her cast the spell on herself.

Red doesn't take their eyes off of it. "Most of it's faint," they say, "but I can see Green and Blue's perfectly." They reach up towards the strands and take hold of them, expecting their hand to just pass through. There's no physical sensation, but the strand moves with their hand. On a whim, Red gives them a tug.

Your heart skips a beat. So does Green's. It leaves an ache behind that's uncomfortable... yet comforting.

Red lets go. "Are they supposed to feel it when I do that?" they say.

"No idea," Celeste says. "I'll ask Margo later. What did it feel like?"

The three of you try to put the feeling into words. "Like someone touched their heart," Red says finally. "Physically."

Celeste blanches. "Maybe... don't do that," she says weakly. "I don't want to chance anything happening."

The thought that something *could* happen, that you're seeing something close to the source of your bond: it thrills and terrifies the three of you. Red looks a little bit longer, the three of you committing the image to memory. "Okay," they say, "then how do we turn it off?"

Celeste makes a gesture, and the vision disappears. Red looks back to see her smiling weakly. "So," she says, "did that help at a—"

Red interrupts her with a fierce hug. Maybe a bit too fierce if the winded sound from her is any indication. "Thank you," they whisper.

Celeste returns the hug. "Thanks for helping me see what I can do," she says.

## Finding Healing

Celeste walked down the packed dirt road, not sure whether the sweat running down her face was because of the afternoon sun or her intense concentration on her spell movements. She blamed the concentration. The spell fell apart in her hands for the umpteenth time. She shook her hands out aggressively and yelled, trying to bleed off the frustration.

It was a simple spell, the same spell Margo had cast at the end of their... battle. Margo had taught it to her in moments. But casting verbally was never the problem. Silent casting required incredible practice in general, and each spell required its own set of practice. Which brought her back to a dirt road in the middle of a foreign country making hand motions into... nothing.

She heard some kind of vehicle coming up behind her. It was still a ways off, but she needed to reset. She stood to the side of the road, closed her eyes, and took a breath. She tuned out the outside world: the distant birds, the wind rustling through the fields, and the approaching vehicle.

Eyes still closed, she brought her hands in front of her. She needed to remind herself what the successfully cast spell felt like. This time, she recited the spell aloud as she went through the hand motions. The spell activated (finally!), and Celeste's eyes shot open involuntarily. She expected to see the few strands from her heart curling off into the distance...

And she saw an aurora.

What had to be thousands of strands blossomed out from a point in front of her: some brightly colored, some deep purples and blues, all waving and weaving as the light from it blocked out anything she might have been able to see.

"Beautiful," she said absently, watching the colors move.

"Uh, thanks, I think?" a voice said.

Celeste jumped and instinctively cancelled the spell. Her vision resolved into a small, white farm truck idling in front of her and the brown-haired faun driving it, leaning out the window with an elbow on the door frame.

Celeste felt the blood drain from her face. "I'm so sorry," she blurted. "I was..." She racked her brain for any reasonable-sounding excuse and came up empty. With a wince she shook her head. "I apologize," she said.



The Lightbringers will return

# The First Sign

“Hey,” the faun said with an easy smile, “I won’t complain about being called beautiful.” They gave her a quick glance. “And you’re not so bad yourself, you know; in case you want to do something about that.”

Celeste couldn’t help the slight smile. “I’m really flattered,” she said—and she meant it, “but I’m on parole and…” She shook her head and tried to end the conversation gracefully. “I’m looking for Eutychia of Mesone.”

The faun flinched. “Are they in trouble?”

Celeste shook her head. “Not at all,” she said. “They have a situation I’ve been tasked with helping.” She sighed. “If you can point me in the right direction, I’ll be on my way and you never have to see me again.”

The faun laughed. It was a bright, musical laugh. “Well, friend,” they said, “I’ve got good news and bad news.”

Celeste connected the dots. “Gaia, send me to dust now,” she groaned.

Eutychia just nodded. “I’m headed into town,” they said. “Are you in a rush?”

“Only to get here,” Celeste said, trying to shake off the awkwardness. “Apparently,” she added.

They chuckled, but their smile fell a bit. “I *do* need some specifics before I let you in my truck, though,” they said.

Celeste cocked her head. “Specifics like…?”

“Like who you are and why you’re looking for me?”

Celeste winced again and took a breath. “Right, sorry; completely forgot my manners.” She straightened her posture. “Mage Celeste of Tenopolis, at your service,” she said. With a wry smirk she added, “Literally.”

Eutychia nodded. “Nice to meet you, Celeste,” she said.

There was an awkward beat before Celeste said, “Let me get my notebook.” She reached into her robe and—slowly—pulled a pocket notebook out. She flipped through the pages and stopped, looking back to Eutychia with a questioning look.

“Does the phrase ‘it’s not just for gamers’ mean anything to you?”

Eutychia went very still. “It does,” they said quietly. “Get in the car, Mage Celeste of Tenopolis,” they said with a smile threatening to split their face in half. “And let’s fucking GO!”

Celeste leaned against the passenger-side door, her elbow out of the window, watching the fields pass by. “It’s really nice out here,” she said.

Euty halfheartedly chuckled. “Melodia’s that bad?”

“No,” Celeste said, pulling herself fully into the cabin. “I mean, Tenopolis isn’t bad, especially compared to some of the more industrial cities I’ve been to off-world. But it’s still a city. We do what we can but

The elf—Celeste—pushes herself off the fence before Red can object. “A spell is just focusing magical energy in a particular way,” she explains. “Most people think it’s the components—verbal, somatic, material—but that’s all in service of focusing the energy towards a desired outcome.”

She starts waving her hands in what look like well-practiced motions, and you see red glyphs and lines begin to form in front of her. “What I’m doing here,” she says, “is building a construct to amplify the effects of a spell. I’m hoping, between this and the sheer amount of love around you, that you’ll be able to see what I see. Or at least the most important part.”

“Around me—you mean my family?” Red says, trying to understand. All three of you are trying to understand; this is a completely foreign set of concepts to you.

Celeste pulls her hands in a sharp gesture, and the construct settles into place: a circle with glowing runes and glyphs rotating slowly around and inside it. The center is empty, waiting to be filled.

The elf relaxes. “Sorry, had to finish that.” She looks at Red. “Bonds of love enable and strengthen magic. The spell I was practicing when we met on the road lets the caster see them. With most people, there’s a set of threads. But you, Eutychia, have an aurora.”

You think back to your dedication, all those years ago. *There is real power in a trinity*, Green had said. And you can’t help but wonder if this is it.

Red can’t help but crack a joke. “So you weren’t actually calling me beautiful, then?” they say, tongue in cheek.

It might be the red light of her spell, but you think you see a faint blush on the elf’s cheeks. “Anyway,” she says, “No guarantees this will work.” She focuses on the construct and begins another set of hand motions, this time with words:

“Greater together than apart,  
Unique and yet aligned;  
Open my eyes to open hearts  
To see the ties that bind.”

A final glyph forms in the center. Celeste steps back and motions Red forward. “Touch the center,” she says, “and concentrate on seeing those bonds.”

do this?"

Euty's grin faded slightly. "I'm going somewhere with this; trust me."

Celeste looked toward the ground. "You chase experiences, savor moments. Most people would think that was healthy, but for you it's covering something. It's the loudest part of your personality so that no one can hear the other side of it. Because if you let things stay quiet long enough to hear it, it'll break you. It *has* broken you before, and it'll do it again.

"If I didn't know your history, I'd try to dig for some past trauma, or try to suss out what you're so afraid of. But if I had to guess now, it comes back to your bond. This is something that's irrevocably changed you. You can't imagine life without it—without them. And since you can't be together physically, you compensate by sharing as many experiences from your perspective as you can. You take in every moment, try every dish, see everything you can, live in the present because they can't..."

Celeste took a breath and sighed. "You live in the moment because you can't think about the future. Because you can't imagine life without them, but that's exactly what your future looks like. And if you ever let that catch up to you, it'll break you."

Celeste raised her head and looked back to Euty who had their eyes closed, a few tears on their face, visibly keeping their breath steady.

Celeste grimaced and looked away. "Told you," she spat, "I'm a monster."

"I asked," Euty said, their breath hitching. "I expected you to be good, and you were."

"Good at what?" Celeste snapped. "At tearing people down? Finding the best ways to break them?"

"What are you doing to do with it?"

That stopped Celeste short. "What?" She tuned back to Euty who had their eyes open, staring at her.

"You read me for filth," they said. "You know where my weak points are." They leaned closer and fixed Celeste with a challenging stare. "So what are you going to do with that?"

Celeste thought for a moment. Slowly the anger and self-loathing faded until, with a slight gasp, she looked back with a smile. "I'm going to show you some magic."



Celeste will return

there's just no way to have the air be this..." She shrugged. "Fresh."

They passed a windmill-powered well. Celeste did her best to study the mechanics involved as they passed, and with a thoughtful look she turned back to Eutychia. "I'm surprised there isn't more magic being used out here."

Eutychia's face darkened. "It's just that plentiful to you?" they said.

Celeste bit her lip. "And I just stepped in something, didn't I?"

Euty stared resolutely at the road. "A bit," they spat.

"Then I apologize," Celeste said. "I'm genuinely curious." A moment passed, and she added, "If I tell you why I'm surprised, would you be willing to tell me what I'm missing?"

Euty glanced to her. "I can try," they said. "But I get to ask you something in return."

"Thank you," Celeste said. She collected her thoughts for a moment.

"I know there's not many spellcasters here," she began. "But packaged spell crystals exist. Mass-produced spell crystals exist, even. Kids buy them with pocket change."

"Yeah," Euty said. "They show up here on occasion. Every so often there's a bushel of them at the traders' shop."

"Exactly! So why aren't they—I don't know—powering wells instead of a pump driven by a windmill?"

Eutychia nodded in silence, pondering their response. They opened their mouth once or twice, but closed it just as quickly. Finally, they tapped the dashboard of the truck.

"This runs off a magitech engine," they said. "There's a spell crystal motor at the heart of this. The fuel cells are readily available and not that expensive. This is what you're talking about, right?"

Celeste blinked in surprise. "Yeah, pretty much."

"Right. So, that's just the motor. There's still the drive shaft, the brakes, the steering, the instrumentation. All of that's mechanical. Which means when it breaks—and I do mean *when*—I can fix it. It takes me a full afternoon in the garage and enough grumbling for my little brother to learn human vocabulary, but I can fix it."

Understanding dawned on Celeste. "But if the engine breaks..."

"Exactly. Best case is there's a spellcaster in town that won't charge an arm and a hoof. I might be able to send some pictures to a mail-order repair service to see if they can handle it, but more than likely I'm looking at a full replacement. And until it gets here..."

"No truck," Celeste finished.

"No truck," Euty agreed. "Now, I use the crap out of this thing, but if I had to go without for a month, I can do that. We—the farm—can do that. But that means—"

“You can’t use magitech for anything essential,” Celeste said flatly.

Euty nodded. “At least not without a solid plan in place.”

Celeste took a breath. “Thank you for explaining,” she said evenly. Another breath. “And I’m sorry for being... blunt?”

Euty rolled their eyes. “You were being curious,” they said. “It’s a sore subject for me, but you didn’t know.”

Celeste made a mental note, but kept her mouth shut. If this was the biggest faux pas she committed during her stay, it would be a good stay.

“In the spirit of curiosity,” Euty said, their voice a little more tentative, “can I ask what the parole is for?”

Celeste sighed. “I stabbed a princess.”

Euty’s eyes went wide. “Oh,” they said.

“Fatally.” Before Euty could react she quickly added, “But she got better.”

The faun raised an eyebrow. “How does *that* work?”

“Magic,” Celeste said with a wry grin. With a sigh she turned back to the window. “Magic I still don’t understand.”

Eutychia kicked open the farmhouse door with a well-placed hoof. “Got the sugar, Ma!” they yelled. “And one more for dinner!”

“Oh, you don’t have—” Celeste began, but a glare from Euty silenced her.

“You’re here for me,” they whispered, “I can be hospitable.”

“I’m sure there’s a place in town I can stay.”

Euty stared her down another second. “We can do this the easy way or the hard way.”

Celeste blinked. “What’s the hard way?”

Euty smiled. “Never mind, Ma,” they called, “she says she’ll get a room in town.”

“Absolutely not!” a deep female voice yelled from further in the house. Stomping footsteps vibrated the entire house as a matronly faun in a food-stained apron rounded the corner. She tripped slightly when she saw Celeste but recovered quickly. “Euty,” she said, “you know where the cots are.”

Eutychia walked forward and handed the pack of sugar to her mom. They stood a full head taller than her. “I do, but she’s only a half-head taller than me.”

“Good, she can have your bed then.”

Celeste paled. “Oh, no, you don’t—”

The faun turned her full attention to her. “And what was your name, dear?”

if so how do I throw them off?” She sighed. “The Queen’s so sure I won’t have a list, but...” She trailed off.

Eutychia picked it up. “But you feel like you haven’t changed?” they said quietly.

“I *know* I haven’t,” Celeste spat. “Cut the fangs, trim the claws; I’m still a monster.”

The silence hung in the air for a moment.

“It got you here, though,” Eutychia said.

Celeste rolled her eyes. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

The faun tapped their bottle against the fence. “That thing you’re describing?” they said. “What makes you a ‘monster’? That sounds like someone trying to survive. Someone who was hurt, or betrayed, or...” They shrugged. “I don’t know, really.”

“No,” Celeste said, “you’re not wrong. No one goes hungry or homeless in Melodia. But there’s nothing social policy can do about two people that never should have had a child.”

“You had to look out for yourself because the people that were supposed to look out for you didn’t?” At Celeste’s nod, Eutychia bowed their head. “No one deserves that.”

“Yeah, well,” Celeste said with a bit more bite than she meant, “still happened to me.”

She turned back to Eutychia to see them gripping the bottom of their bottle, slowly turning it in their hands, eyes still closed. “Alec had a similar upbringing,” they said quietly. They took a breath and looked back at Celeste. “So yeah, you did what you had to do to survive. And it worked, so you kept doing it.”

“Until I stabbed someone, yeah.”

Euty shook their head. “I wouldn’t expect you to turn it off. Hell, I don’t think you *should*.”

Celeste’s jaw dropped. “What?” She sputtered for a moment. “How is—I’m supposed to—what part of me finding someone’s weaknesses is supposed to be *good*?”

Eutychia furrowed their brow in thought before blurting out, “Do me!”

Celeste just stared flatly.

“Come on,” Euty said with a smirk. “You’ve been with me most of the day. What’s your analysis?”

Celeste glared back. “Are you sure?”

They nodded excitedly.

She sighed. “Okay. Your confidence is solid; that’s not bravado. Your family is important to you, so there might be an angle there if I needed leverage. You chase experiences—Are you really sure you want me to

“There is one question that’s nagging at me, though,” Eutychia said. They turned their head and met Celeste’s gaze. “Why are you here?”

Celeste cocked her head. “For you?”

Euty shook their head. “I mean why are you *here*? We might not have a phone out here, but the trading post in town does. We also have mail. Why come all the way out here yourself?”

Celeste let her gaze fall to the ground. “I needed to see you for myself,” she said, “to know who you are.” She swirled her bottle idly, letting the beer vortex around the inside.

“When I was fighting Margo,” she said, sounding smaller than she had yet, “I said some things about the queen that were...”

“Mean?”

“And not even true.” She raised her head. “Among other things, that she sent soldiers into battle while waiting in safety in the palace.” A sigh. “I talked with her afterwards, and she brought it up.”

Eutychia grunted in sympathy.

“Yeah. She listed off a dozen...” She counted on her fingers. “No, more than that. She named a whole squad that she had ordered into an ambush centuries ago. Listed them off.”

Euty whistled.

Celeste took another breath. “I didn’t know this, because there hasn’t been a war in a hundred years, but she goes on the battlefield herself.” She chuckled. “Might be *why* there hasn’t been a war in so long,” she muttered. “But she told me that those were the people that died because she stopped seeing them as people. And she—”

Celeste squeezed her eyes shut. She took a shaky breath. “She told me how happy she was,” she said, voice cracking, “that I didn’t have a list yet.”

Eutychia hopped off the fence. “You don’t, right?”

Celeste looked up with a weak smile. “I mean, I did stab Margo cleanly through the heart.”

“But she got better?”

“But she got better.” Celeste shook her head. “I’m not sure I did, though.”

“How’s that?”

“I can’t turn it off.” She took a drink. “Margo and the Queen keep telling me that I’m learning how to see people as people, see them as the complex individuals they are, give them the respect they deserve. And yet, every time I see someone, I’m analyzing: are they a threat? Are they an obstacle? Can I use them? Do they have something I can leverage? Are they analyzing me the same way I’m analyzing them, and

Celeste just stared for a moment, completely and suddenly out of her depth. “Celeste?”

She smiled warmly. “Welcome to my home, Celeste,” she said. “I’m Myrto, and my husband Irenaeus is around somewhere.” She sighed dramatically. “You probably won’t see him until two minutes before dinner. Speaking of, anything I should avoid?”

“I don’t think—”

“Oh, and are your bags still outside? Eutychia, why haven’t you brought her things in?”

Euty rolled her eyes. “She doesn’t have bags, Ma; she’s got magic pockets.”

“Oh!” Myrto gave Celeste another once-over. “Well, I won’t claim to understand all that.” She lightly tapped Euty’s shoulder with the back of her hand. “Go get your room ready.”

Eutychia smirked at Celeste and started walking away. Celeste started to follow them and was immediately blocked by Myrto.

“Now, dear, you must have been traveling for hours, right?”

“Eh,” Celeste said, “a few days actually.”

Myrto’s jaw dropped. “A few—what a horrible host I am. Please! Sit, sit!” She motioned—and nearly shoved—toward the seating area. Celeste stumbled into a chair, still dazed. “Now, can I get you something to drink? To eat? Dinner isn’t for a few hours but if you’re hungry, I’m sure I can find you something.”

Celeste held up a hand. She took one breath, let it out, and nodded. “I’m not hungry, thank you,” she said politely, “but I’d love some water.”

Myrto beamed. “Of course, dear.” She turned back toward the kitchen but called over her shoulder, “And is there anything you’re allergic to? I haven’t started dinner yet, so it’s no problem if you are.”

“Nothing, ma’am, but thanks for asking.” She thought for another moment. “Though I’m not great at spicy food.”

“Oh, that’s no problem,” Myrto called from the kitchen. “Irenaeus thinks my banana bread is spicy.”

“Because I’m *allergic*, Mother!” a deeper voice called from somewhere else in the house.

“That’s not what you said for thirty years, Rainy!” Myrto answered.

With a sigh an older faun walked into the sitting area. “Never let the truth get in the way of a joke,” he grumbled, “even—” He stopped short when he saw Celeste.

Celeste, determined to have at least one interaction today start well, got to her feet and held out her hand. “Celeste,” she said.

Irenaeus stared wide-eyed at her for a moment before collecting himself and shaking her hand. His grip was firm, but not painful. “Irenaeus,” he said. With a nod of his head, he said, “It’s an honor to meet you. Can I ask why a Melodian Court Mage has graced my house?”

Celeste suddenly wasn’t sure how to answer. She’d been so focused on getting here that she’d neglected a few details of her story—namely, how much of a story she needed. How did he—She glanced down at her robes and mentally kicked herself. It was just her luck that someone would recognize her badge of office.

“She’s here for me,” Eutychia said, walking around the two of them to take her own seat. At her father’s questioning look, she added, “About Alec and Jordan.”

Understanding dawned on Irenaeus’ face. “Green and Blue?” He smiled. “That’s good, then.” He motioned back to Celeste’s seat, and the two of them sat down.

Celeste turned to Eutychia. “I assume you’re ‘Red?’”

They nodded. “It was what we called each other before we knew names. Still do, actually.”

“So RGB lighting isn’t just for gamers?”

Euty smiled broadly. “You’re quick.”

Celeste smirked. “I better be.”

Irenaeus cleared his throat. “Mage,” he said, noticing how Celeste stiffened at the title, “may I ask what your intentions are with my child?”

“Pa—” Euty groaned, but a hand from him stopped her.

Celeste shifted in her seat. “My understanding is they—all three of them—want to be found?”

“Desperately,” Euty whispered. Irenaeus added his own nod.

“Then that’s what I’m here to do,” Celeste finished.

Irenaeus smiled. “Then you are welcome in my home as long as you wish, Mage.”

“Thank you,” she said, “but *please* call me ‘Celeste.’”

Irenaeus cocked his head. “Did you not earn your title?”

“Oh, I did...” Celeste said. She absently gripped her upper arm with her other hand. “I just... haven’t worn it well.”

The older faun furrowed his brow for a moment. He got up and went to a nearby bookshelf. He traced his hand down a line of identical thin volumes and pulled one out close to the end. He flipped to a specific page, glanced up at Celeste, then put the volume back and pulled out the one behind it. Flip, close, replace. Flip, close, replace. Flip—

“Court Mage Celeste?” he said. “Youngest in a century to hold the title.”

Celeste did her best not to shrink down further. “That’s me,” she said quietly.

“Took a leave of absense in year 1435 of Queen Artemis?”

Celeste scoffed. “‘Leave of absense’? That’s what it says?”

Irenaeus put the volume back on the shelf. “Every year since. I’d love to hear the story, if you’re willing to share.” He returned to his seat and leaned forward attentively.

Celeste looked from him to Eutychia who was looking curiously. With a sigh she leaned forward.

“You’re trusting me,” she said, “so I should return the favor.” She shook her head. “Do you remember what else happened the year I ‘took a leave of absense?’”

Irenaeus thought for a moment. “That’s when Princess Margo ascended, right?”

“Wait, ‘ascended?’” Eutychia said. “She’s not the queen’s daughter?”

“Princess’ is a rank,” Irenaeus and Celeste said together. The looked to each other, and Irenaeus held up his hands and leaned back.

Celeste sighed. “Yeah,” she said. “There was a lot of talk that a new princess was going to be appointed, and I was so sure it was going to be me. I *wanted* it to be me. And when it wasn’t...” She shook her head. “I told off the queen and ran away.”

She looked up to see the two fauns sitting in rapt attention. With a slight smile she continued. “So I ended up in this place called ‘Nowhere’...”

Celeste leaned on the wooden fence and took a swig from her bottle. “Your family brews this?”

“Nah,” Eutychia said, pulling herself up to sit on the fence. “We supply the hops, and *they*—” They tap the label on the bottle. “—brew it.”

“Solid,” Celeste said and took another sip.

The two sat in a companionable silence, watching the sun set over the fields.

“You seemed overwhelmed at dinner,” Eutychia said after a moment.

“A bit. How many relatives did I meet?”

“Two aunts, an uncle, seven first cousins, four first cousins once removed, two brothers, one sister, one sister-in-law, and one nephew,” the faun said with a smirk. “So not as bad as it could have been.”

“Not as bad?”

“It could have been harvest. Twice as much family plus the migrant workers.”

Celeste whistled.