

“Tell us about the Firedancers, Evelyn.” The bar was loud. Evelyn desperately wanted to go home but she does hangout with her squadmates sometimes. It would be good to develop some kind of relationship even though she struggled on the social side. Evelyn’s eyebrow rose on Matcha’s, her Mirialan who was also Lieutenant of the Siren Squad, was asking her about a tradition on her home planet.

“Why?”

“I’m curious!” The others agreed as Evelyn nodded. It wouldn’t hurt to talk about home a little bit.

“I do not know how long ago this tradition was made but it’s always the first day of Spring. We would spend three days before spring just preparing. The feasts, the location, everything. Fires are involved so we had to make sure we do not accidentally set anything or anyone on fire.” She paused for a moment and realized her squad mates were actually listening, despite the loud scene at this bar.

“In the center, there is always a massive bonfire. We would have a few smaller ones spread out but the big one is where all the attention goes. During the day, we would just feast and find long lost friends and family we had not seen in a while. We would spar because we can catch up much quicker from a fight than we would from sitting down and talking for an hour. If you go to one, you would know who was chosen to be a Firedancer. They would wear all white with a golden sash with beautiful beads around their waist.” She leaned forward, her fingertips tracing the edge of her wine glass.

“It takes a lot to become a Firedancer and be chosen to dance around the center bonfire. See, anyone can do it on the small ones but the tourist attention always goes to the grand big one. Fire to us, are many symbols. Rebirth, renewal, but the most important, cleansing. To start over. Burn scars leave nasty reminders of mistakes. Of horror. Or they can be a reminder when your life started anew. It all depends on who you talk to.” She realized she got carried away and shook her head as she leaned back.

“When night falls, the few who have the honor to do the Firedance for the center bonfire, we have a double bladed weapon that we call Ritual Brand. In the center, there’s a very small amount of oil to spill to the sharp edges. You have to time it just right. The oil doesn’t stay long, evaporates, and can be deadly if it doesn’t slide down the sharp edges.” She smiled softly as she looked away. She got to be a Firedancer several times before she went away from Eshan and never looked back since.

“To light it aflame, we have three choices. One, you could use the bonfire but everyone agrees that would be boring. Two, you can spar with another who managed to light theirs. Third and the more tricky one, use it as a flint. You would need strength, precision and accuracy to spark a bladed weapon with a small amount of oil. Only a few can do the third choice.” She took a sip of her wine and set it back down at the table. They were still listening. Why do they listen better for this than her orders? No matter.

“Once our weapons roar to life we... just dance. We spar with others. We-” She cleared her throat. Maybe she should do another one. She needed renewal. Rebirth. Her past had been so heavy on her shoulders that most days she couldn't breathe.

“After hours of the dancing and when the moons are high in the mid-air, it becomes quiet. Not a whisper. Not a sound. No cheering, no drums, nothing. We would then, risk our hands and place the ashes that the bonfire had been making all day and mark on our bodies where we need cleansing the most. Arms for strength. Legs to carry. Heart for-” She stopped and cleared her throat.

“That would be all.” The group groaned in protest and wanted more questions but the glare from their Captain said it all. She was done with this conversation.

Some other time, perhaps.