*Scarves.*

Sadness permeated the air making it seem heavy and chilling it slightly, despite the heat of the late summer sun. The sadness emanated from an older man wearing straw hat with keen brown eyes, sitting on a bench. It was sadness that went deeper than depression. The sadness spoke of a heart that had missing pieces. Only a witch would feel that sadness, a witch like Zari.

Zari sat next to the man knitting a scarf out of soft alpaca yarn. Fall was a few days away, and it wouldn’t be long before it got cold. An alpaca scarf was a quick make, and a good product to offer in her clothing store. Scarves held the magic of warmth and comfort.

Zari had decided to spend the evening in the park because the setting sun was a beautiful golden orange that reminded her of far off tropics. Green leaves canopying above her only added to the exoticness of the evening. It had made her cheerful, and she’d managed to knit the scarf in nearly no time, infusing it with the magic of hot sandy beaches and endless blue oceans. The evening exhilarated her. That was, until the man sat down next to her and she was reminded of the chill of a dead winter.

After some time, he spoke, “You’re as pretty as my wife… was.” Zari didn’t say anything. She could tell by the man’s frown he felt awkward about his statement. She knew it wasn’t an awkward come-on line. Witches with strong magic drew out the inner thoughts of people. Often when a stranger encountered such a witch, they’d confess their worst fears and secrets within minutes of meeting them. So, the man’s comparison didn’t shock Zari as much as it gave her insight to his thoughts.

“I mean, my wife looked nothing like you. She had pale porcelain skin, long black hair, and dark grey eyes. She resembled your beauty. Her eyes were kind thoughtful like yours.” He got quiet for a moment. “I’m sorry. You don’t want to hear the babblings of an old man.” Putting his hands on his knees, he started to push himself off of the bench.

“I have my mother’s eyes,” Zari said softly, setting her knitting needles in her lap. “She believed that kindness was rare but meant to be shared.”

The man smiled. “I bet you resemble her.” His shoulders relaxed and he sat back against the bench before offering his hand. “Harold.”

Zari took his hand. “Zari.”

He smiled at her. “It suits you. Very exotic.” She’d agree with his assessment of her. She did look exotic that day. Her thick curly hair was haphazardly pinned up with yellow sparkling hibiscus hair-pins. She’d overdone the yellow, wearing a chiffon shirt that was the color of sunshine. It daunted the white under-camisole and shorts she’d matched it with. Yellow was one of her favorite colors. She even worn yellow and gold eyeshadow, bringing a gold tone to her brown eyes. The outfit made her dark skin almost glow. She’d warn the outfit because it made her think of fantastical island beaches. The last days of summer were upon them and she wanted to relish in the colors and the warmth.

However, she was willing to bet the man didn’t really notice her outfit. He was staring at her, yet his eyes were glazed over with some far-off thought. “My wife’s name was Evangeline. She insisted I call her Eva, but I never did. She was as pretty as her name.” He paused and frowned. “She’s been gone for six years now.”

His sadness and his referring to his wife in the past tense told her as much. She would have said ‘sorry’, or ‘my condolences,’ but such statements felt placating. Zari knew from personal experience.

“She’d knitted too. Once she made me a scarf. Like a careless fool, I lost it.” He took a deep breath. “I wish I still had it, but I can’t even remember what color it was anymore.”

Zari picked up her needles and started knitting another row to the scarf. Her thoughts turned to a woman with black hair, shining grey eyes, and pale doll like skin. Evangeline would have poured all of her love into the scarf she’d knitted for Harold. “I feel like it would have been blue. Because your eyes are brown, and it would have matched well.”

“You know, now that you mention it, it was blue.” He smiled again. “A really bright sky blue.” As soon as he said the color, the yarn in her hands turned the color of a bright summer sky. “She made it one night in the dead of winter, because it was supposed to get below freezing, and I had to work traffic the next day. I was a cop before I retired.” He stopped and let out a snort. “Evangeline sat next to me watching television, those needles clicking away, as the two of us laughed at Johnny Carson. She liked to laugh. I loved making her laugh. It made me laugh.”

“She sounds lovely,” Zari said, binding off the edge of the scarf.

“Don’t get me wrong. We had our arguments like every other couple. Evangeline was feisty. We just loved each other through them.” He paused long enough to look around the park. “That’s the secret to an everlasting marriage. You love each other through it.”

“I do understand that.” She tied off the end of the scarf and cut the thread, deciding against tassels. The scarf was pretty as it was.

“Even after… You watch them get sick and die, you keep loving them.” He looked to Zari with tears forming in the corner of his eyes. “But, that’s not what hurts the most, losing someone. I know I will see Evangeline again. I have faith. But… But, this morning, I’d forgotten the pet name she used for me. It took me an hour to remember she called me, Major. You know after the six-million-dollar man. She said I had a broad chin and nice lips like Lee Major’s.”

“I can see it.”

“You seem a bit young to know that show.” He looked at her with a questioning look.

“Well, I sew a lot and I like old TV. Everything from black and white movies through the eighties.”

“What’s your favorite?”

“That’s a tough question.” Zari smiled, looking to the sky and pondering her answer. “I’d say the original Battlestar Galactica. Is it wrong that I have a huge crush on Starbuck?”

He laughed. “You and Evangeline. Our day would stop for Battlestar Galactica. I’d forgotten that.” His laughter, then his smile faded. “I’ve forgotten a lot of things about Evangeline, a lot of little things. Some days I have to go look at our wedding picture to remember what she looked like in her wedding dress. I know she was beautiful, but I sometimes I can’t remember what she looked like.” He got quiet before he buried his face in his hands. “I’m afraid I’m forgetting her.”

Zari reached out and put a hand on his back. “You don’t sound like a man that is forgetting his wife.”

“I know I am. I miss her, but I can’t remember what her hand felt like on mine, or the smell of her perfume on her. I can remember vividly when she died, and how much it hurt, but I’m forgetting her.” By the time he was finished he was making soft sobbing noises into his hands.

Zari understood. She’d felt the kind of loss he’d felt, and there were times she had to take long moments to remember exactly how her parents looked when they’d smile at one another, or her. It had only been two years since they’d died. “It doesn’t sound like your forgetting Evangeline to me. It sounds like you carry her inside you.”

Whispering under her breath she cast a spell of contentment and poured magic into the scarf in her hands. She filled with the warmth of an exotic summer, the comfort a soft hand could offer, and the happiness of a firm hug. Imbuing her spell with all the memories Harold had shared, she ended her cast and her magic settled into the scarf. Scarves were comfort and warmth, and this one would be that for Harold.

After a long time, he calmed. Pulling a handkerchief from his inside pocket, he wiped his eyes. “I’m so sorry, Zari. The problems of this sad old man are not yours.”

She patted his back. “No, they could never be, but I wish I could ease your heart.” Pulling her hand away, she picked up the scarf in her lap. “Well then, Harold.” He turned toward her, and she lifted the scarf over his head and draped it around his neck. “Fall’s coming soon. And, I think it will be a cold winter. This will keep you warm.”

He absently fingered the scarf. “It’s so soft and fine. I couldn’t accept…” He stopped. Zari’s magic had settled into him, surrounding him with comfort. “It reminds me of Evangeline’s touch. Soft but firm, loving but guiding. It’s like magic. Magic and love.”

Zari looked at him. “Love is magic.”

He leaned forward, examining her features. “Love is magic, but how could a scarf…” he trailed off.

Zari smiled. “I don’t know. Maybe you needed a blue scarf today, and I happened to have one.”

“I’ve been around long enough to know not to question such a gift.” He threaded his fingers through the scarf, running it between them. “I’d like to pay you.”

“Nonsense. But,” she dug through her red purse, pulled out a card, and offered it to him. “If you want the matching hat and mittens, those you will…”

“I most certainly do, and I absolutely will pay for them,” he interrupted, taking the card and reading it. “Zari Grace Durant of Adorn Me, fashion, couture, and more.” They both giggled at the silliness of it. “I like it.” He stood. “I have a dinner date with my daughter and my gran, but I will be stopping by and visiting you.”

“I hope you do.”

“And, I’ll be wanting that hat and mittens.”

“They won’t be cheap,” she warned with a sincere smile.

“I wouldn’t expect quality work to be cheap.” He flipped the scarf over his shoulder, offered her a smile, turned, and left her sitting on the bench. The sound of the Battle Star Galactica theme being whistled carried on the breeze back to her.

Zari reached into her purse and pulled out a sable ferret. “I like him,” she said, kissing at his nose. “Should we watch the adventures of Starbuck with dinner.” The ferret twitched its nose at her, and she laughed. “Yes, again. Get over it.”

Cradling her ferret in one hand she packed her things into her oversized purse and lifted it onto her shoulder. Suddenly the air around her got frigid, and chills went down her spine. She looked down at her ferret, stroked its head and frowned. “My grave just got stepped on.” She took in a deep breath and let out a loud sigh. “I do believe that was a warning.”