I smile at the thin layer of snow that coats the leaves of the darkened garden outside. The sense of peace that has fallen around my tiny house is almost overwhelming, it makes me want to collapse into bed and pull the woolen kilt over my head, to push the pillow over my ears until I fall asleep, my feeble hand losing its grip on the bedding and dropping it to the hardwood floor. It shouldn't feel this nice, this normal, but it does. Just another day. Another night. Another year.

I drop the bag of seeds I'd been carrying onto the ground and the soft sound the bottom of the bag makes when it hits the cold earth resonates in the silence. I see no point in dragging it around anymore as all the birds have long ago gone to sleep, bidding me goodbye with soft chirps at dusk. They might as well, I suppose, as little avian eyes can see nothing in the darkness of the town surrounding them, excluding only the scarce moments when the flashes of fireworks light up the sky, making it seem, if only for a second, that night has little to do with our surroundings, that for just a tiny moment in time we are standing outside, taking in the sights of broad daylight. I whisper a soft happy new year to the hidden winged creatures and walk back through the French door and into the dimly-lit sitting room, where a motionless figure sits watching me resolutely, a glass of sparkling wine in his hand. He looks up at me and I see the glimmers of fireworks reflecting in the depths of his cerulean eyes. A brow rises up to meet the wrinkle on his forehead and a sardonic smile appears on his lips, laugh lines ghosting around it. Slowly, he stands up and sets the glass onto the table, right next to a second one, filled to the brim with water. I can no longer drink champagne, not for another three months. Not forever. Tired, I drag my feet to meet his comforting warmth and almost fall to the floor when the horrible wave of weariness hits me unexpectedly, crashing onto my sick shoulders and then receding back to where it came from. Just then the realization seems to hit me, even though it has been aiming for my heart for quite some time: this might be our last New Year together. My last New Year.

I stifle the sadness that threatens to dampen my holiday spirit and pull on a smile like one would pull on a pair of unwashed socks. I don't want to fake my smiles. I want them to be real. Of course, in my position even a fake smile would be something of a miracle. New Year's Eve is the time for miracles, isn't it? So I tug on a celebratory grin and face him with mirth in my eyes. He sees right through me, though, and shakes his head, a stretched-on smile of his own greeting me. I slip into his arms and push my hands into the back pockets of his dark blue jeans, the ones he insisted on wearing because they are so comfy. Ugly, I said. I don't mind them too much anymore.

I inhale the delicious smell of the chicken we'd had for dinner that lingers on his white cotton shirt and breathe out with a flourish. After all these years, after everything we've been through, after what the doctors have said and after all the fights we've had, he still smells like home. More so than the cushion I'd brought from my childhood house when I'd moved in with him, more so than the sandalwood fresher we keep in the kitchen, more so than the two angels sleeping upstairs, waiting for the first January of many in their lives to come. He is home to me. Remembrance of our first meeting glimmers behind his brilliant eyes and I can see it too: the rain on New Year's Eve during a very mild winter, the horrible stench of my wet-through clothes, the sound of my ankle snapping when I stumbled on a particularly wet cobblestone and into the very arms that are holding me at the
moment. All of that seems so long ago, it makes me feel almost ancient as I think of the years we have spent together when in reality there were only five. Five. Exactly five.

We start swaying on the hardwood floor in a feeble imitation of a dance - basically it's him holding me up as I sag against him, a content smile finally making an appearance on my ghostly pale face. I try to keep up with the movements of his hips and fail. He only chuckles and pulls me impossibly close. I find myself wishing I could stay that way forever. Maybe I will. Me and my little forever.

I shiver.

"Cold?" His resonant voice asks me gently and I shake my head. Not cold. Just so, so tired, I tell him in a hushed voice.

"Me too," he answer and gives me another soft squeeze. I wish we could just mould together and stand there, in the middle of the living room that has seen both our tears and laughter, as a monument to ourselves. A beautiful statue, which later could be bought by some elderly gentleman who would have more money than he would know what to do with. The gentleman would die soon and we would be willed to a museum. Together, we would hug our way through a myriad of tourists, all of them gawping at our beauty, their finger pointing at a silver plaque in twenty languages which would say, with a brief history of our elderly benefactor, "Star-crossed lovers", Sculptor Unknown.

"Do you want to head upstairs?"

"I-I don't think I can," I whisper, terrified of the weakness in my voice, the same voice which used to give orders and yell at secretaries, the same voice which sealed deals and the same voice, which screamed all through the night while its proprietor gave birth to two beautiful children. It would have been better if I lost it, I think to myself. A voice which is no longer mine has no place in my life. The only person I want to talk to understands me without words. "I think I'll stay here, wait for the New Year to come."

"I'll stay with you," he says and then adds thoughtfully, "if you want me to."

Of course I want him to. Always.

Together we wait for the clock to strike twelve and for another series of fireworks to soar up into the sky, lighting it with a mix of blue and pink and green. The smoke ebbs away as we fall asleep, clutching each other tightly, wondering how many days of the new year we would be allowed together. Before I'm ripped away from him. We lie still, Morpheus guarding us at the foot of the couch like a faithful hound. Me and my little forever.