

Chapter 80

Nicole's heart pounded in her chest as she looked around. She was alone. It seemed like no one had ventured into this unrecognizable part of the forest for years. Her senses heightened and were disoriented by the sudden change in her surroundings.

The air was thick with the scent of damp earth and foliage— a stark contrast to the adrenaline-filled atmosphere she had just left behind.

The dense canopy above cast dappled shadows on the forest floor, adding to the sense of mystery and disorientation that enveloped her. Her senses, normally attuned to the presence of her pack, now struggled to discern friend from foe in this uncharted territory.

Nicole's footsteps were muffled by the thick undergrowth as she cautiously moved forward, her eyes scanning her surroundings for any signs of danger. The silence of the forest was unnerving, broken only by the distant sounds of battle echoing through the trees.

She felt a sense of foreboding creep over her— a nagging feeling that she had stumbled upon,

something far more threatening than she could have imagined.

She became worried about Liam. She couldn't feel him or anyone from the Dark Moon. It was as if she had been cut off.

The foliage grew thicker as she ventured deeper into the forest, the trees towering above her like ancient sentinels.

A sense of primal energy seemed to permeate the air, causing the hairs on the back of her neck to stand on end. She had a nagging suspicion that she was being watched, that unseen eyes followed her every move.

The forest seemed to shift around her, the trees appearing taller and more menacing. Shadows danced on the forest floor, casting eerie shapes that seemed to taunt her from the periphery of her vision. Nicole's senses were on high alert, her wolf instincts urging her to remain vigilant and ready for any potential threat.

As she pressed on, the atmosphere grew increasingly oppressive, as if the very air itself held secrets waiting to be unraveled.

Her heart raced with a blend of apprehension and curiosity, her mind racing to make sense of her surroundings. She had always trusted her instincts, but now they seemed to falter in the face of this unfamiliar territory.

In the distance, she heard a faint sound of murmuring voices, carried on a gentle breeze that rustled the leaves. Intrigued and wary, Nicole followed the sound, weaving through the trees with careful steps. The voices grew louder, their words becoming discernible as she drew closer.

Peering through a thicket of bush, she caught sight of a clearing bathed in soft, ethereal light. In the centre stood a group of cloaked figures, their faces obscured by shadows.

They huddled together, their voices hushed as they engaged in what appeared to be a ritual of some kind. Nicole's instincts told her to stay hidden, to observe from the safety of the foliage.

As she watched, her curiosity turned to unease. The air crackled with energy, and she could sense darkness lurking beneath the surface.

The figures moved with unusual grace, and their movements were synchronized and deliberate. Strange symbols adorned the ground, glowing with an ominous aura that sent a chill down Nicole's spine.

Unable to resist her urge to investigate further, Nicole edged closer, careful to avoid detection. Her eyes widened as she witnessed the unfolding scene before her.

The figures chanted in a language she couldn't comprehend, their words resonating with an

ancient power that seemed to permeate the very fabric of the forest.

As the ritual reached its climax, a surge of energy erupted from the centre of the clearing, enveloping the figures in a swirling vortex of light and darkness.

Nicole's heart raced, her instincts urging her to flee from the scene. But her curiosity held her in place, compelling her to witness the outcome of this mysterious gathering.

Suddenly, the ground beneath her feet trembled, and the clearing was consumed by a blinding burst of light. Nicole shielded her eyes, her senses overwhelmed by the intensity of the spectacle. When the light subsided, she cautiously opened her eyes, only to find the clearing empty, devoid of any trace of the figures who had been there moments before.

A shiver ran down her spine as she realized the gravity of what she had witnessed. There was more to this forest than what had been seen— a hidden world lurking just beneath the surface. Determined to uncover the truth, Nicole inched forward. She had seen three figures and they looked very familiar.

Nicole's head spun as she found herself back on the battlefield, disoriented and unsure of what

had just transpired. She blinked in confusion, trying to make sense of her surroundings. And then, out of nowhere, someone toppled onto her, causing her to stumble and fall to the ground.

The world seemed to blur as she struggled to regain her bearings, her mind reeling with confusion. Groaning, Nicole attempted to push herself up, only to freeze when she realized that it was Asha who had toppled onto her.

Her eyes widened in disbelief as she looked at her, her mind struggling to process the sudden appearance of someone who had been missing just before the battle started.

Nicole's puzzled expression must have been evident because Asha quickly spoke up, trying to explain her sudden appearance.

"I was hiding," Asha said, her voice tinged with urgency. "I saw you fall, and I couldn't just leave you."

Catching her breath, Asha offered Nicole a hand to pull her up.

Nicole's mind was a whirlwind of conflicting thoughts and emotions. She couldn't trust her senses anymore, unsure of what was real and what was a trick of the battle or the witch's magic.

But Asha had been her closest friend, even though she had been behaving weirdly of late. Despite

the doubts swirling within her, Nicole decided to accept her help.

"I... I thought you were gone," Nicole stammered, her voice filled with both relief and confusion.

"Where were you? How did you find me?"