

Chapter 22

After a day or two, Jack and I agreed that we should go to the Pole and see the other Guardians. Mostly to assure them that I was okay and doing much better.

Jack assured me he wouldn't loosen his grip as Akilina sent us fast and fair winds to the pole since he didn't have a snowglobe on him. As we flew, I couldn't help but admire the landscapes beneath us... everything was beautiful.

I was still holding onto Jack tightly when he finally landed inside the main room of the Pole, right in front of the Globe, sparkling with lights. It was a happy sight to see. I was happy to see the Yeti's again, Phil in specific waved hello to me and said something that I couldn't understand. Jack laughed at my confused face and led me to the meeting room.

"Do they know we're here?"

"We're supposed to have a meeting today, I decided bringing you would be a happy surprise." I rolled my eyes as he led me down the hall. He seemed to be pretty familiar with the Pole and just about every room. I was impressed, but I had problems keeping up. How was he such a fast walker?

Finally, he opened the door to a large expansive room. North's back was facing us and he stood to greet Jack.

"Ah, Jack! Glad you could join us-" Then he turned and saw the both of us, "Catori?" I smiled awkwardly and gave a little wave, and North promptly picked me off the ground to give me a hug.

"Catori! It is so good to see you again!" He squeezed a little and set me down so I could breathe.

"... hehhhhh... It's good to see you too North." I wheezed out. North laughed. Behind him, Bunny, Tooth, and Sandy all appeared, and Tooth also gave me a gigantic hug, this one not as lung crushing as North's.

"Ahhhhh!!! Catori! I'm so happy to see you! We were so worried about you! Are you okay? How've you been feeling?" She inspected my mouth as she asked, and Jack gently pushed her away to let me speak. Bunny gave me a supportive grin and tossed me a decorated egg with pretty patterns.

"Saved it for you from Easter." He said. I had to give him a hug.

"Thank you, Bunny. I'll keep it safe."

We all sat down together, and I noticed that whatever they were initially going to talk about changed now that I was here. They all bombarded me with questions about what I'd been doing the past few months.

"Well, I wasn't alone, there were a few Native American spirits I owe for their support. Secondly, Nascha?" Their faces changed when I mentioned her, "I was able to reach out to her and understand her struggles better. I called upon a shaman to save her, and she's back to the normal Nascha I once knew."

"W-wait, what do you mean you once knew?" Bunny asked.

"Nascha and I knew each other as humans. Our tribes would trade with each other sometimes, and so we had a few interactions." I explained.

"How did she become a sk*nwalker?" Tooth asked.

"For the Navajo, her tribe, to become a- to turn into her form, one must turn to witchcraft. And back then, she was very depressed and lonely, and she thought at the time that witchcraft and summoning spirits would help cure it." They all gave me looks, "Hey, we didn't have conventional depression medication in the 1870s, sure, it wasn't the wisest choice, but in her mind, it was."

"She's at peace now. She's just a shapeshifter, she doesn't have any supernatural abilities beyond that. She actually prefers to keep to herself so the likelihood of running into her is close to none." That seemed to reassure them. And so, after talking about me a little longer, we all turned to focus on the task at hand.

I began to wonder when I would be indicted as a real Guardian, surely, they didn't forget? After all, the reason why they reached out to me in the first place was to make me Guardian?

I gazed out the window in Jack's room at the Pole. It was cooler than what I preferred, but I'd learned to tolerate it.

"What's on your mind, Sunshine?" I heard him walk up behind me. I turned to face him and shrugged.

"A lot of things." He snickered at my response, "But really, what do I have to do to become an official Guardian? What's the process for that?" He looked at me puzzled before he gave me a smile.

"You just have to figure out what your center is."

"My center...?"

"Yeah, didn't North talk to you about it?" I shrugged.

"I don't remember," I paused, "and my tooth box is gone..."

"What?" I looked at him sadly, and almost ashamed.

"Pitch stole my tooth box, though you already knew that," Jack nodded, "but he used it against me. And I'm sure it's forever lost in the mountains. There's no getting it back." He was shocked.

"I'm sorry Catori... I know how much that meant to you." I sighed.

"Maybe it'll turn up somewhere... who knows?"

"I hope for your sake it does. Tooth would have a conniption fit if she found out it's lost." I nodded.

"Ugh, I know... But how do I figure out what my center is?"

"It's different for everyone. But one way or another you figure it out." I trusted him that he was right, but I was worried about how long it would take for me to understand.

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