

Chapter 8: Jack's POV

It was still really late into the night when I opened my eyes. I woke up to the sound of a jackrabbit bounding through the sagebrush. As I sat up and rubbed my eyes, I took notice that someone was missing from the group.

Catori.

"Catori!" I shouted, standing up, and waking the rest of the Guardians. Bunny looked up at me with a dark, and tired stare.

"What the bloody hell, Jack! It's the middle of the night." I whacked him with my staff and pointed out the problem.

"Catori's missing!"

"Maybe she went out for a midnight walk." Tooth suggested. North looked around and his gaze froze at the mountains. There was a strange black shimmer moving around.

"Oh no..." Bunny said. It was Pitch's black sand, and it was coming right for us! North cursed in Russian as we all sprinted for the canyon. I briefly turned around to see a winged figure following Pitch close behind, carrying something in its arms.

Sandy and I formed a wall to protect us from the approaching black sand. Suddenly I got an idea.

"North! Give me a snowglobe!" North gave me a questionable look, but he still passed me a snowglobe, I whispered into it "Hopi reservation". I threw it ahead, forming a portal and we all jumped through it just in time.

On the other side, we all landed flat in the middle of someone's backyard.

"Aughhhhhh..." Bunny groaned, moving out from underneath North.

Tooth and Sandy got up and looked around.

"Why are we in someone's backyard?" Tooth asked. I remembered that Catori told me about this family, and she had a particular connection/attachment to them. I went to the window of one of the kids and so ly knocked on it.

The girl and boy both ran outside.

"Whoa-ah!" The girl exclaimed.

"So it's true! You all are real!" The girl exclaimed. She smiled up at us, holding her little brother's hand.

"I'm Kimberly, but you can call me Kim. And this is my brother Jacob."

"It's nice to meet you both. But we need your help."

"Sure! But let's go to the park... I don't want to wake up dad." Jacob ordered. We followed them to the local park where we explained our situation.

"We're always told to never go into the mountains, there're bad spirits there."

"Like what?" They both shrugged their shoulders.

"We don't know, we're just not supposed to go there."

We talked with the kids for a little while longer and North gave them a little gadget that would alert us if they saw something fishy. In the meanwhile, we made it back down the streets, the sun was beginning to rise, and we heard voices.

"Will you quit bugging me about her? We're not a thing." It was a male. A female voice, with a Russian accent, replied back in Russian.

"The both of you! Enough! Catori will reach out to us when she's ready." Catori... that voice. Those voices were familiar.

"Akilina?! Eshe?! Heath?!" Tooth exclaimed, flying forward and tackling three spirits to the ground, picking up the paler looking female and hugging her.

"Oh my goodness it's been FOREVER! Where have you been!" Tooth laughed. The female smiled.

"Good to see you too, Tooth! I thought you were at the palace?" We finally caught up to the group, and I saw familiar faces.

Eshe, the elegant and classy Guardian of Spring. Her green eyes flashed when she saw me, I just chuckled nervously at first. She was older than me and had been a Guardian well before me, she and I got along somewhat well. Like Bunny, she was never impressed when I messed around her during springtime. Which was fair, I suppose, she was kind of uptight.

Heath, Guardian of Autumn, on the younger side but he and I were the same age. He was pretty laid back like me and enjoyed a good prank.

And Akilina, bless her, the Guardian of Wind, she'd taken me all over the world, my best mode of transportation.

"What are you three doing out here?" North asked, pointing one of his swords at them. Heath crossed his arms.

"We'd ask you the same." He replied, his Boston-esque accent obvious.

"We're looking for Catori." Tooth explained. Eshe raised an eyebrow.

"Interesting, so are we. She's been MIA to us for the past three weeks. We were supposed to go to England later for a performance by another nature guardian." I shrugged.

"She disappeared in the middle of the night. We think she's in the mountains."

"Also Pitch is back." Akilina narrowed her eyes and her eyebrows knitted together.

"I will blast that bastard into the чертобъsky!" She cried. North gave her a look.

"Язык дорогой." He said. She grumbled, her platinum blonde hair getting into her face. Despite her gentle appearance, she was an incredibly powerful spirit.

Eshe looked at us.

"Why do I have the feel-" She was interrupted as she was knocked over by a Nightmare. A herd of them flew over us. Pitch was riding the back of one, a devilish grin on his face.

"Oh my, it's been years since I've seen all of you together at once. The Guardians of childhood and the Guardians of Nature all together! What a delight!"

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