

Chapter 209

Rûe

The trees were almost a blur as Ares races through the thick trees. The forest was oddly quiet except the pater of Ares's paws on the forest floor. My mind drifted for a second as my gaze locked unto every passing tree. I could not seem to put my finger on it but something was slightly off.

"Stop." I called out to Ares as my eyes darted around. We were the same place we started. How could we not have noticed it before?

Hearing my desperation and slightly on edge voice made Ares halt. "What, why did we stop?" Stefan asked confused, seeming to have grown a liking to not having to walk.

"Hush you fool." Gorjon hisses lowly, eyes darting around in wary.

"Something is off here." I murmur. "Look we have been running around in circles. We have been here before." I pointed at the paw print on the ground that was a few inches ahead Ares.

Ares lets out a growl and walks forward until he is beside one of the prints. He dips his head, snout to the ground and sniffs. "You are right, it is mine." He grumbles in confusion. His head raises and he looks around while I do the same. How was it possible?

"Are you two sure we are going the right way?" I asked the elves as I craned my neck to look around. I squinted my eyes when I noticed a marking carved into the bark of the tree. It was intentionally done.

"Aye from what we remembered." Gorjon answers. "But Corlette did warn us that we must be wary of passing through this way, for they have tiny creatures that love to manipulate." He continues.

His last words piqued my interest. "Manipulate what?" I whispered now on high alert. Something was amiss and I was certain it was those tiny creatures Gorjon was speaking of.

His shoulders rise and fall into a shrug. "I do not know, we have never stumbled upon them before."

As those words stumbled out of his mouth a sound similar to buzzing bees disturbs the looming silence. We all stayed frozen waiting for whatever had been making that irritating noise.

"Stay alert Rue." Ares mind links. I could feel how tense he was beneath me, almost hard as a damn rock.

I looked around and found my eyes falling back to the carving on the tree. My brows lift. "Gorjon?" I called out in a hushed whisper.

"Aye?" He crane his neck to look at me. His brother, Stefan, body was stiff with angst. He has not uttered a word yet or taken his eyes off the paw prints ahead of us.

"I think I know what our tiny creature friends manipulate." I nudged my head to the carved tree. "They manipulate the earth to project an illusion. We are inside an illusion." I finished feeling the pressure of eyes watching our every move.

Goosebumps rise on my skin and I snap my eyes to every nook and cranny of the forest. Nothing. Whatever those creatures were, something told me they do not want to be seen. Well perhaps not as yet.

"Hold onto me tightly Rue." Ares demands through the mind link. I nodded even though he could not see me.

"What shall we do-" Gorjon's words cut short when I let out a pained gasp. Something, oddly small, zapped straight across my upper arm. My eyes drop to my arm. Blood gushed out quickly like a flowing river. I am startled by the long gash for how small the weapon felt.

"Rue!" Ares growls, panic clutching to his being. He felt helpless knowing he could do not, but try to get us out of there. But that was proving difficult since we had no idea what was real or not.

"I am fine." I grunt out, wiping the blood off using my finger. There was no time to tear a cloth and wrap it around the wound. Time seems to be ticking already as it is.

Something zooms past my ear. I snap my head around and my eyes fell upon tiny creatures that looked similar to fairies. The only difference was that fairies were known to be beautiful creatures while these resembled an ogre.

Green skin, yellow deadly eyes and many sharp teeth that one could not count in a minute. They were ugly and looked ready for war as they bared their teeth in warning.

In their tiny hands held a bow and arrow with tiny needle-like sticks inside a small quiver. Now I know why we had failed to see them before, they blended in with the green leaves.

One with eyes of anger, looking to be male, takes the needle-like stick from the quiver and draws it to the bow. He sets it up ready for attack. The others followed suit, baring their teeth. Snapping my head forward I gripped onto Ares more firmly.

"Ares?" I called out through the mind link.

"Aye love? Do you feel any pain? Does it still hu-"

"Run." I cut him off.

"The two of you keep your head down and tucked." I demanded as Ares does not take a second to register my words and hurries out of there. The elves listened, both breathing quickly out of fear for what was about to happen.

The tiny needle-like things dart towards us but the smooth movements of Ares has them all missing their targets. I snap my head to look at the back only to see the creatures flying towards us. Odd that they did not own a pair of wings, neither did they look like they had magic. Whatever they were, was not something I was familiar with.

Even with Ares's speed they managed to catch up. But I guess it was only inevitable, knowing we were actually on their turf. I hissed when one came forward to bite my thigh, its teeth pushing past the barrier of my cloak to pierce my skin.

I slapped it away and it lets out a growl of anger of some sorts. Ares lets out a rumbling snarl and my eyes fall to one of the creatures digging its pointy teeth in his leg. I kicked it away but later cried out when another bit my shoulder.

It was like they wanted to eat us alive. We were outnumbered, confused about where to go and quite frankly I was beyond tired of all these things I went through those past few days in here. I was done. The last straw was another bite to my hands followed by a pained cry from Stefan.

I did not know what came over me but a power I have never felt before started searing through my abdomen, racing through my veins until it was too much to bear and I opened my mouth. At first I could not hear myself or realize that Ares had stopped.

But then everything seemed to have gone mute, strangely quiet. I did not feel the burning of teeth sinking into my flesh anymore nor the sharp sticks gushing at my skin. I had not even realized that my eyes had closed shut on their own.

But when they flicked open I was surprised by the fallen trees and those that bent until they broke. But what surprised me most were the dead little creatures on the forest floor. All dead, non moving. Had I done this?

The illusion seemed to have been broken since the tree with the carving was lying on the forest floor. Its leaves blown out and branches snapped in different directions.

It is then I feel a sudden pressure in my skull. Ares trying to get to me. I snap my head forward and I felt confused by the shocked looks Gorjon and Stefan sent me as they twisted their bodies in a way to face me.

"What the hell was that?!" Ares questions through the mind link the moment I let him in.

"What do you mean?" I asked, confused as I looked around. It looked as though the trees were cleared back a long distance away.

"You let out a scream, almost like a chant of some sorts and this happened. Did you regain your magic?!" He questions with curiosity as he looks around.

I looked around. Yes I had been powerful, there was no doubt about it but I had not been this powerful to clear out thousands of trees at once. "I have no idea." I said truthfully.