

## Finding the Ghost

It has been three days since we tried to find the invisible being. We had no luck whatsoever.

I tried luring it out, even calling for it, doing the same things I did when it first came. But to no avail.

I think it knows that we're looking for it. "This is so frustrating," I slump down on the furniture that Des created for me, because I'm still not used to sitting on the ground all the time. I'm wearing normal human clothes again, since I haven't slept with anybody these days.

"I have talked to all monsters who are connected with nature, none has any idea what it could be," Lazarus reveals, and I sigh.

"Nadira and I have been trying to sniff out anything unusual. But there is no strange spirit, no ghost," Mehdi adds, and I frown.

"Wait, ghosts exist?" I whisper, and all sitting here start laughing. Des, Richard, Lazarus, Mehdi, Ivar, and Nadira.

"You felt the cock of every possible monster inside of you, but you don't believe in ghosts?" Ivar asks and chuckles. "They are rather funny coevals."

"So it's not a ghost, then." Richard rubs his chin. "I don't know of any other being that can be invisible and do what Cat described."

"Me neither," Des sighs deeply. "Only a ghost would have been able to conjure something like that."

"But a ghost wouldn't have had to blindfold me, would it?" I ask, and both look at me in surprise.

"Touch  ." Richard shakes his head. "This is a true riddle."

"A djinn could do that, but there is no other around," Nadira says. "We feel each other when we're close."

"What if...," I start, but then bite my tongue.

"Say what you wanted to, love," Des says with a warm smile.

"No, it's probably stupid."

"Any input may help," Lazarus says, and the others nod, so I sigh and hang my head.

"What if it's not a...known monster?" I say quietly, and they all look irritated.

"What do you mean?" Richard asks.

"Well, we didn't know about Salazar before, right? So what if there are others none of you know about?"

"Possible, but unlikely." Richard rubs his chin again. "I can locate any monster that's in a certain proximity, and I don't feel any other than those we know about."

"Then what about mixed breeds?" I inquire, and now they all look puzzled. "What if... I don't know, two species we have here are able to breed and we didn't know about it, and now we have a mixed baby?"

"I have never heard of such a thing," Des shakes his head. "I understand why you suggest that, but I doubt it's possible. Not even all monsters can breed with their own, let alone another species. But it is not a stupid question nonetheless."

Des gently strokes my arm, and I feel a little less naive now.

"But how do we find the monster, then?" Mehdi sighs. "This annoys me, I want to know what it is."

"Could it be imagination?" Nadira asks, and we look at her in surprise. "No offense Cat, but you've been taken advantage of by so many monsters, maybe your body is rebelling."

"They didn't take advantage of me, I offered it to them," I correct, but she just shrugs.

"Still. Your body might be a shapeshifter now, but your mind isn't. Maybe your brain tries to cope with all this supernatural sex by conjuring up something else. I mean...look at it this way, since we've been searching for the invisible being, you haven't slept with anybody, have you?" she asks, and I shake my head. "See? Maybe it's your brain asking you to dial it down."

"I doubt that, I mean, why now?" I say, convinced, but when I look around, I feel their hesitation. Lazarus and Mehdi avoid eye contact with me, Richard seems concerned, and even Des looks worried. Only Ivar doesn't seem to mind, but he doesn't really know me yet.

"It's not that, you hear me?" I stand up in frustration, and Des does so as well.

"We don't know what it is, love. But we have to consider all options, there is not much..."

"I am *not* going crazy!" I yell, and while I know that this makes me look super crazy, I can't help it. "But me, keep your goddamn dicks in your pants, you won't get anything from me anymore!"

I stomp on, and while I do that, I feel a wave of rage wash over me. By the time I'm alone at the shore of the lake, I have cooled down a bit. I'm just sad now. I sit down and pull my legs close, fold my arms on my knees.

Do they really think I'm going mental? I mean... I see where that's coming from, they witnessed me enjoy the most lunatic stuff ever, but they all said they liked it!

Tears fall down on my arms, and only now I realize that I've been crying. But are they...right? Am I crazy?

I can't have imagined it, I saw the marks on my wrists, the ripples in the lake. I felt the structure under my body, the tongues *inside* my body. This can't be all made up in my head!

It doesn't take too long until I hear light steps on the grass behind me. I wipe my face, and I'm pretty sure to know who's coming. And when a blue tail is wrapped around my waist, I know I'm right. I smile and stroke the scales.

"Hi Ruis," I whisper, and the baby dragon purrs, crawls around me, so I can lean against his body, while his head is nested next to my lap, his tail on my legs. "You can't see me unhappy, can you?"

I smile and stroke his beautiful head. *No.*

I shudder when I hear a voice in my head. Fuck, I *am* going crazy!

*No, you're not. I'm the first born, so I'm the first to speak. It'll be another two, three weeks until we transform and can speak aloud.*

"Trans...form?" I ask in surprise. "To human?"

*No, to slugs.*

I furrow my brow, but if there is such a thing as sarcasm in a dragon's face, I'm looking at it right now.

*Of course to human. Didn't my father tell you?*

"No. I guess...he didn't tell me lots of stuff," I scoff, but then I realize that I'm talking to his dad. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't..."

*I don't know much about humans, but I've learned some things from the other monsters who know. And I'm sure that our parental relationship is nothing compared to humans'. I don't feel closer to him than to anyone else in here.*

"Isn't that sad?"

*No, it's how it is. I can explain everything I know to you if you want. I want to see you smile, not cry.*

"Des said that...you're not my children," I whisper, and Ruis raises his head.

*Of course not. This would be inappropriate when we breed you.*

To hear it directly from one of the dragons makes my cheeks turn red immediately.

*This is nothing to be ashamed about, Cat. You may have given us life, but we do not share blood. Unless... you want us to.*

Before I understand what he means, I feel his tongue on some of the marks that are left on my body. I could have removed them with the shapeshifter thing, but I kind of like them, so I left them.

"You...want to taste my blood?" I ask, and Ruis closes his eyes, lays down his head again.

*I want everything you want. If you want pain, I want to give it to you. If you want me deep inside of you, that's where I want to be. And if you want to never bring my children to life, then that's what I want.*

"That's...different to what Des wanted," I realize.

*That's because he couldn't have survived without you. But I live by helping others. And helping you helps me survive.*

"You sound terribly grown-up for a baby," I say and hear a dragon's laugh in response.

*We age differently. One day in the first year is like one human year. After that, we age very, very slow.*

"Will you...sit here with me for a while?"

*Whatever you want.*

After a long silence with Ruis and some more light banter, I have made a decision. I need some distance.

Ruis accompanies me back to "camp" and when we arrive there, it's only Des around, which is very nice by me.

"I am sorry we upset you, Cat. I didn't mean to..."

"I know," I interrupt and he nods. "But I need you to do something for me."

"Anything," he says immediately.

"Create a door for me," I say and he frowns. "I need to go outside."

"To...the human world?" Des asks slowly and I nod. "We...we will find the thing that's bothering you, you don't need to..."

"I'm not leaving, Des," I say with a smile. "I just need to find out some things."

"So you will come back?" Des asks quietly, and I laugh.

"Of course I will come back. Nothing could keep me from it."

Des conjures me a door and explains how I can return. Other than having to go through the whole company, this door leads directly to an empty room in the official company building. I am wearing normal human clothes again, and when I step through the door, I feel a little...liberated.

I exit the small storage room and am immediately hit by the noise, smell, and the whole energy around me. Tons of people rush by, busy with their work that's just a ruse. They have no idea they are actually working to serve a being they don't believe exists.

I walk to where I think the exit is and can't wait to go outside.