

Chance Encounter Chapter 2: The Escape

They had managed to make their way to the forest just outside of the North gate of Coldstone; the dense trees offered some shelter from the heavy rain. Julian lumbered through the brush still in his transformed state; Kiko cradled in his arms. His body started to ache and he could feel his muscles tighten “sorry Kiko but I need to put you down for a bit” his voice a bit strained.

“What about the Drow?” sudden panic in her voice

“I’m certain we’ve given them the slip for the time being, in my experience Dark Elves aren’t as graceful in the woods as some other races” his tone was reassuring as he found a dry spot under a large tree for her “and I need to pull this bolt out while I have the chance” Kiko sat patiently and obediently under the tree, clinging as best she could to the long jacket she had been lent.

Julian grasped the bolt shaft in his hand and started to wiggle it around and giving it a soft tug letting out not a single sound of pain, though the discomfort was clear on his face. “Shit the bolt has a barbed head; I’m going to need more time that we have to get it out properly.”

“You can tell that simply by moving it around” she asked him in bewilderment.

“Yeah well it’s not the first time I’ve been hit with an arrow...or bolt for that matter” he replied with a tone that made him sound almost like he was proud of that fact as he snapped the shaft in half to shorten it. “How about you” he asked “can you walk yet?”

“I can certainly try, but my arms and legs feel as if they’ve fallen asleep. If only the sun would come out for a moment.”

Just then Julian’s cat like ears twitched and he suddenly twisted to the side, two arrows zipping past his head and lodging themselves in the tree above Kiko. Reacting quickly Julian pulled her to her feet and tossed her over a shoulder like a sack of potatoes, taking off like a shot through the forest once again.

“Fuck they found us faster than I had hoped they would” he snarled.

“What are we going to do?” Kiko asked, her voice getting frantic once again.

“Gotta loose them, maybe get deeper into the forest”

“Can’t you just use your magic on them like in Coldstone?”

“Too many for a cramped area for my taste, the trees would cause me more issues. Best thing to do right now is keep running”

They headed further into the forest until they eventually made it to a large clearing of a river bed that ran through the forest. The rain had finally stopped sometime during their running and the sun was out in full force. Julian started to make his way along the riverside with Kiko still over his shoulder. She could feel the sun beating down on her back and started to feel immensely better, she was always astounded at how quickly some sunlight made her feel like herself; though she waited until the ache was fully out of her limbs before saying anything.

“You can let me down now if you’d like” she said sweetly as she pressed her hands on his back to lift her upper body to a more horizontal position.

“You sure?” he asked as he came to a full stop. “Yes thanks to the sun finally coming out I’m feeling better and my body no longer feels asleep”.

“All because the sun came out?” he asked almost in wonderment as he lowered her to her feet, transforming back into his main half-elf form as he did. “Yes, I don’t know why but my body seems to respond well to sources of heat, the Sun especially” she said as she took his jacket off and handed it back to him, the half-elf averting his eyes from her bare breasts “and going long periods without proper heat and sunlight can actually get painful, these last few days were made bearable thanks to the fire in the tavern but the moment I went outside in that cold rain any strength I had just disappeared. Ok you can look again”

Julian brought his gaze back to her, she had pulled her arms out of the sleeves and tied them around her chest in a make shift shirt; covering little more than her nipples. He couldn’t help but notice she looked different, still the same but yet different. He hadn’t noticed it fully in the wet rain or when she was wearing his jacket, but now that she was standing full in front of him he could see just how pretty she actually was.

His muscles were starting to ache more and felt stiffer than they had earlier on in the forest; he started to flex his right hand as he rolled the shoulder. “You ok?” he heard her ask “I can feel my body stiffening, I think there may be a slow acting paralytic poison on the head of this

crossbow bolt” he pulled out a thin blade and jabbed it into the same hole as the bolt, wincing.

“What are you doing?” Kiko’s voice was laced with a bit of fright. “Don’t have time to do this the right way so I’m going to do it the fast way” with a quick prying motion on the handle and a hard grunt through grit teeth he removed the bolt with one go. “Uh shouldn’t you stop that bleeding?”

“Ideally yes, but this will help to purge some of the poison, though I fear it may be too little too late”

Kiko let out a sigh “Well I guess with that done, where are we going anyway?” she asked as started to hike up her long dress, tying the fabric into knots in certain areas to keep it from falling back down; freeing her legs for better movement. “The next town over” he responded, donning his jacket as he watched her. She was bent over slightly as she tended to her dress and he was getting a nice cleavage shot.

“Oh what’s there?” Kiko went back to a full standing position as she asked.

“My horse”

Kiko stood blinking thinking about what he just said “you have a horse and you didn’t bring it with you? WHY?” her tone suggesting she thought he was a little touched in the head. Julian couldn’t help but laugh at that “it’s because he draws too much attention and stealth was supposed to be the key, sadly I hadn’t planned for Dark Elves”

Accepting his answer she placed her hands on her hips “ok then, how do we get there from here?”

“If we follow this river it’ll take us right by it. Now we best get going before our company arrives” just then he noticed that his companion had grown very still and silent, her eyes appeared as if she was looking right through him. He spun with his hands on the hilts of his swords to see a Drow in front of them.

Julian lunged drawing his swords and slashed vertically at the enemy with one of them. Like a flash the Dark Elf drew his own weapon and managed a last minute parry though missed the follow up thrust of Julian’s second blade. The black sword pierced through the light armor that this group of Drow seemed to favour as if it was parchment, the adversary falling to the ground as his blood colored the ground red. “Uh Julian, I think we’re in a bit of trouble” Kiko’s voice trembled with a bit of fear, bringing the half-elf’s attention back to her.

In the short time it had taken him to dispatch his foe they had gotten surrounded by who appeared to be the rest of the Drow. He grabbed Kiko by the arm and pulled her behind him “stay close to me”. She did as he said and clung to the back of his jacket. Julian sheathed one sword then held up that now empty hand as if he was cupping something. A small ball of light started to form in his palm as he whispered some incantation; once again she couldn’t make it out.

“Hate to tell you boys but you’re a little too forward for the lady, best piss off while you can. Unless you think you can take her from me” with that last statement the small army of Drow started to converge on them with impressive speed. He then threw the ball of light at the ground as he yelled “DUG...HAUT” the ball smashed into the ground like

it was the heaviest thing ever conceived and suddenly giant stone spikes started to immediately erupt from the ground. There was no pattern to them either, some going straight up while others were angled.

Many Dark Elves got impaled by the spikes their bodies turning brittle and crumbling into dust; those that weren't were trying frantically to keep it that way. Julian lifted the sword that he still had in hand in front of him and turned it so the blade was pointing at the ground, the black metal started to give off an odd glow. "Get ready to run" he said to her over his shoulder. With a quick hard thrust he stabbed the ground "BOMBOS" just as quickly as the ground had turned into spikes, it now started to erupt with small powerful explosions that were destroying the bases of the spikes; causing them to crumble and fall to the ground kicking up a great deal of sand, dirt and dust; enough to blanket the general area with a giant cloud.

Julian and Kiko burst out of the cloud in a dead run down the river side. The half-elf had to admit he was surprised that she was keeping up with him stride for stride. *She's fast he thought with proper travelling clothes she may actually be faster than me.*

Kiko let out a surprised yelp as Julian scooped her up into his arms without warning, she noticed that he had transformed again. "What are you doing" she asked with some shock.

"Fall up ahead, we gotta jump and there's no time to debate it" he let out a feral roar as he doubled his pace. That was when Kiko saw the drop off where the river and the ground just seemed to end. She clasped her hands over her mouth to stifle a scream, she wasn't sure if

the Drow where already back on their trail or not but she would be damned if she was going to be the cause of it.

With a mighty push of his legs Julian jumped off the cliff, Kiko heard a rapid fire thumping sound as they hung in the air followed up by a sudden explosion on his back that snapped his head forward, his face twisting up in pain; they crashed into the water below with a thundering splash, thankfully the river was deep.

Kiko breached the water with a fierce gasp for air, taking in a deep breath she dove back under the water only to breach the surface once more; this time lifting Julian's head out of the water. Holding him close with one arm over a shoulder and across his chest she managed to pull him to the shore and get him out of the water.

He had gotten knocked out and reverted back to his normal form which she was thankful for, though she imagined part of his weight was from his gear he still seemed rather heavy for his apparent body type; she could only imagine how heavy he'd be in that were-tiger like form of his. He was on his belly and she could see where it looked like five arrows had been in his back but she couldn't tell how deep they had gotten as the explosion apparently caused them to either disintegrate or get blown away; a large spot on the back of his jacket was singed.

Managing to roll him onto his back she leaned forward bringing an ear to his face, her eyes going wide when she realised he wasn't breathing. Tilting his head back she pressed her mouth against his and breathed air into his lungs, placing her hands on his sternum she started to press down; which was a hard task due to his mail and leather armor.

That seemed to be all that was needed as Julian started to sputter and coughed up a good deal of water, rolling onto his side he tried to get to his feet only to have to take an immediate knee. "Careful you're hurt" Kiko said with some worry. "I know, and I think those arrows had more of that poison too" he responded with an eerie calm.

"How can you tell?"

"The poison seems to be spreading faster, and I know there wasn't that much poison on the crossbow bolt. I can feel my muscles tightening and stiffening faster. Need to find somewhere to hide while it runs its course." He tried to stand one more time, Kiko moved under his right arm to try and help take some of his weight "well then I guess we'd better get looking".

They had been trudging through the dense forest for what seemed to be the rest of the day as the sky had started to get dark, they had yet to find a place to hide and Julian was getting slower by the moment. Honestly Kiko was surprised that the Drow hadn't attacked them again yet, she knew they were out there she wasn't stupid; maybe they were waiting for Julian to be fully immobilized.

"There, that cave over there" Julian's weakened voice broke the silence; she turned her gaze to where he was trying to point seeing the answer to their prayers. Moving as quickly as possible she made her way to the cave while still trying to help the half-elf stay on his feet. Once inside she laid Julian on the cavern floor "now what" she asked truthfully not really sure what to do next "we're sitting ducks as it is, if I build a fire they'll be on top of us like flies on a hog's arse"

“In....my....inside....pocket” his speech was extremely strained due to the poison, he was getting worse fast. Kiko bent over him and started to search the inside of his jacket for a pocket, once finding what she was after she stuck her hand inside and pulled out the first thing she grasped “....a stick?” her tone heavy with disbelief. She looked at Julian for an answer but his eyes had since closed and his breathing had become shallow; he wasn’t going to be getting up by himself anytime soon.

Kiko sat looking at the stick, it looked like something you’d pick up off the forest floor; but why carry something like this....*wait a minute* she thought to herself. Grabbing the stick with both hands she snapped it in half. Instantly they were surrounded by what appeared to be a cottage that had taken on the shape of the cave’s interior. “Ha I was right, it IS a Hearth Stick” she said aloud with pride that she figured that out on her own. There were a couple of beds as well as a table that had two plates of hot food waiting to be consumed. Her stomach started to grumble and growl; she hadn’t eaten much if anything at all that day and was starting to feel it.

“First things first” she said as she looked down at the man who had saved her life “we should get you comfortable”. While she had managed to drag him out of the river on her own she knew she wasn’t going to be able to fully pick him up on her own; not full in his gear anyway, that meant only one option. Kneeling back down at his side she started the task of undressing him, snaking his arms out of his jacket sleeves she left it to lay underneath him as she then undid his sword belt; the hilts touching the floor with a soft ‘tink’.

Moving herself to behind his head she grabbed hold of his shoulders and lifted his upper body until he was in more of a sitting position. Managing to get the chain shirt pulled up over his head she let it fall to the floor before repeating the procedure with his leather tunic. She stopped when she saw his bare back, it was toned and well-muscled; there was a large bruise in the middle of his shoulder blades, she assumed that was from the explosion.

That appeared to be the only real damage; his gear had protected him from pretty much the entire explosion minus the impact. There were a few small cuts that she guessed were from the arrows, but they were so shallow that there was no sign of bleeding; granted poison doesn't need a real deep wound to work its ill magic. Pulling his left arm up and over her head she lifted him up off the floor with a very unladylike grunt until he was leaning into her so she could carry his weight with her own body.

Making her way over to the nearest bed she plopped him down on his back, Kiko found herself once again staring at him; this time at his bare chest. Much like his back it was well toned and defined with scars randomly placed here and there from previous battles she assumed, some more faded than others. She found him very attractive, granted that was normal for most with elven blood in their veins but this was more than that.

He was half-elf true enough but unlike most he seemed to favour his human half, generally speaking elves didn't like facial hair and were fairly slender and lean. This one was with full facial stubble and a body built for battle, he was much larger in muscle mass than he appeared when in full clothing. Kiko couldn't help herself and started to

nervously trail a finger around his muscles and down his stomach, stopping herself abruptly when she realized that she had started to unlace his britches.

Face red with embarrassment she decided to go eat the food that was on the table, a little surprised to find that it was still steaming hot. “Well I guess we’ll see how good conjured food is” picking up a knife and fork and dug into the meal which was just simply some meat, vegetables and roasted potatoes. To her pleasant surprise it was very good, the veggies were cooked yet still crisp and the meat and potatoes were both spiced perfectly.

After eating her fill she leaned back into the chair and stretched while letting out a long yawn. Getting back to her feet she walked back to where Julian was resting to check on him, he was breathing better and didn’t seem to be in any discomfort. “You must be very resilient to be muscling through the poison so well” she said to him, knowing full well that he was completely out of it. Leaning forward she placed a hand on his forehead to make sure he didn’t have a fever, feeling relieved that he didn’t. Deciding to get some rest herself she climbed onto the other bed, falling asleep the moment her head hit the pillow.

She was woken by the sound of movement, opening her eyes she sat up on the bed. “Morning sleepy head” Julian was sitting at the table eating a breakfast that was comprised of soft boiled eggs, well cooked bacon, various fruits and vegetables and cheeses.

Kiko rubbed her eyes “is it morning already?”

“That it is, quick thinking on figuring out the Hearth Stick by the way” he said with a smile “I’ve already scouted the area and it looks like we managed to lose our dark skinned friends.”

“That’s good” she said with a yawn “so what’s the plan of attack?”

“Well after breakfast we’re going to head to the next town which should be pretty close” he said, taking a pause to bite into a piece of bacon “we’d best get you some new clothes, yours got pretty tattered with all the running and such yesterday. It’s kind of distracting.”

~Chapter 2 Fin~