

Chapter 8

Meelo

Day 5

Seq and I held hands while we walked through the woods that night. He suggested it and I couldn't say no to him, since I still felt guilty about what happened earlier with Rye. Before we had left camp, I had picked up my new knife, sheath and bow from Rye.

"I've always enjoyed taking walks in the forest at night," Seq said. "For some reason, the stars always make me feel like I'm never alone. Even if I can't see them during the day or on a cloudy night, I always know they're there. I guess it's because they make me think of my mom. I like to think she watches over me and my dad. It's too bad you couldn't have met her before she died. She was the most amazing person," He paused for a moment. "You think I'm weird, don't you?"

I shook my head. "Oh, no! I don't think that at all. It's just... It kind of makes me wish I had parents like you do. I feel like I missed out on those happy memories that everyone should have when they're young,"

Seq's ears flattened and he groaned. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to depress you," "It's fine. You didn't do anything wrong. Come on! Tell me more about your mom. What was she like?"

Seq paused, not sure if to continue talking about the topic of parents. Finally, he answered me. "She was full of love. Until the day she died, she wasn't just my mother; she was my best friend. I can't believe your parents treated you so badly. Why wouldn't a parent show their child nothing but love and acceptance?"

I sighed. I had asked myself the same question so many times and still didn't have an answer. "I don't know. The Kreq frown upon expressing emotions like love and sadness. They say that demonstrating those feelings are signs of weakness. But..." I paused and resumed my thought. "I think the real reason that the Kreq don't show those feelings is because they're too concerned about their outward appearance. To be honest, the Kreq aren't the only ones who do it. I think everyone holds something back from those around them because they're afraid of being shunned. Every person feels that they have to hide something in order to be accepted, all because they're afraid of being driven away,"

It was obvious that Seq wanted to change the subject. "So, do you have any siblings?"

I was silent for a moment. "I had a brother,"

"Had?"

I glanced off into the forest. "I'd rather not talk about it,"

Seq stopped walking and pulled me to a halt with his arm. He removed his hand from mine and placed it on my cheek, making eye contact as he did so. "You don't have to talk about it if you don't want to. I'm sorry for being so snoopy,"

My arms wrapped themselves around Seq. "Don't say that. You're not bothering me at all! We're only having a conversation. And..." I chuckled and smiled. "You're perfect,"

Seq snorted at the very idea. "Yeah. *I'm* perfect!"

I glided one of my hands slowly down to Seq's side. "Yep, you are. And thank you for being so patient with me,"

The fox gave one of his silly giggles. "It's the least I can do for someone so *handsome!*"

"Really?" I purred.

Seq nodded.

"Well now, I think a reward is due,"

My eyelids closed just before I leaned in to kiss Seq.

After being lost in a few moments of passion, I found myself pressing Seq up against the trunk of a tree. Although, he didn't seem to mind much as he continued to moan and return my kisses. It didn't take long for Seq's hands to find their way onto my back, while my own hands caressed his quivering thighs.

"Well, isn't *this* a surprise?" a voice asked.

I rolled off of Seq as we both grasped the hilts of our blades. Before us was a Kreq patrol, consisting of five cats in total. However, the voice had obviously come from the snow leopardess before me.

"Riter," I whispered, as I felt my insides sink.

Seq's ears perked up and gave me a look out of the corner of his eye. "Riter?"

My eyes continued to glare at the snow leopard before us, not even letting her out of my sight for a moment. Her eyes were just as hostile as ever. "Seq, this is my mom, Riter. She's the leader of the Kreq,"

Riter gave a stern look to the fox, who had stuck his tongue into my mouth a moment before. "Is this why you joined the Kyan? So you could fuck this fox?" she coldly asked.

I could feel my lips pull back and reveal the slightest hint of my fangs. "No. I became a Kyan because they actually treat me with respect,"

Riter did not respond.

Seq, thankfully, broke the tension that had filled the air. "What are you doing in our territory?"

Riter continued to be silent for a few moments and stared at me. She broke the silence, but kept her spiteful stare on me at all times. "I would like to discuss the current *relationship* of our two tribes with your leader,"

Based on her emphasis of the word "relationship", I assumed that she was trying to say how much she disapproved of me being with Seq. *Like I care.*

Seq sighed. "Follow me. Meelo?"

I eased my gaze and slightly turned my head to look at my boyfriend, who continued to speak.

"Walk behind them. Make sure none of them wander off,"

I nodded and sauntered to the back the Kreq patrol, catching a few harsh glances as I did so. After I was ready, Seq began walking and the patrol followed.

While the group headed towards camp, I dug through my mind, trying to determine what Riter was planning. My toes cringed inside my moccasins. *Walking straight into the enemy camp isn't exactly a great tactical move. She might have other Kreq nearby.* But I didn't see or smell any trace of Kreq other than the ones in front of me. Well, whatever it was that Riter was planning, I knew that it involved me somehow.

It was strange that in just a few moments, my life seemed perfect and now it seemed to be on the verge of crumbling. A low uneasiness burned its way into the deepest regions of my stomach as we continued to walk onward towards camp.