

Chapter 44

Meelo Day 47

Riter's claws came sideways through the air and almost slashed my cheek open, just before I ducked. Once I took a long step back from her, Riter grinned again. "What's wrong, dog bait?"

I ignored her and kept my distance. "Fuck, you,"

Without hesitation, I lunged forward and successfully cut the top of Riter's head, slicing off her left ear.

I wasn't able to deal the blow without getting hurt. Just as I took a step back, Riter's claws ripped their way down the side of my neck. She wasn't able to hook me, but the wound still stung and I already felt the familiar warmth of drawn blood crawling over my fur.

As I circled the Kreq leader from a safe distance once again, I used my left hand to examine the fresh cut on my neck and kept my right hand ready to attack. I withdrew my left hand and saw that it was covered in my own blood. While there wasn't enough blood for me to be greatly concerned, it still made me anxious. How many more attacks like that could I have taken? I tried not to criticize myself too much and refocused on the smiling snow leopardess in front of me.

"Aw," Riter mocked. "Is the faggot scared of a little blood?"

I had to remind myself not to let her get under my fur. If I couldn't think, I couldn't fight. Instead, I figured it was time to go on the offensive with some taunting of my own. "Why do you have to be such a monster? After all of this death and misery, you're still willing to keep going?"

Her grin only doubled in size. "Gladly! I'll butcher every man, woman and child in the Kyan camp once I'm done with you,"

The leopardess stepped forward and made another attempt to sink her claws into me, only that time, I was able to step out of the way.

Well, that didn't work. I guess I'll have to do better. I put on a fake smile. "The world will be better place when I kill you, just like I killed Dooka,"

Riter's grin flattened out and her nostrils flared. I got her attention, but I wasn't sure if that was a good thing. "After I kill you, I'll cut your balls off and put them in your fox's mouth one last time, right before I slit his throat!"

Great. She's really pissed now.

My thought barely finished before Riter came at me with another lunge. This time, she was faster than before and I was barely able to dodge her claws.

Lucky for me, though, her recovery wasn't as quick, so I attacked. My claws ripped through her left side, spilling her blood down her thigh and onto the ground beneath us. Before she could retaliate, I stepped away once more.

The bleeding leopardess faced me. For a moment, she turned her head down to look at her bleeding side. Her hand found its way to the blood and it returned up in front of her face. Once the bloody hand was in front of her muzzle, Riter's blue eyes flickered and she grinned. While keeping her eyes on me, Riter tilted her hand back and poured the fresh blood into her mouth.

I won't lie. It was sickening to watch the woman, whose approval I used to seek, drink her own blood as she stared at me. After she finished drinking, Riter lowered her hands to her sides. "Nothing wakes you up like the taste of blood,"

She's screwing with my head. She has to be. Right? Whatever the answer was, I tried to ignore her.

While my eyes searched for an opening as I circle the Kreq leader, she continued to taunt me. "Did those Kyan teach you to fight like such a pussy? A real man wouldn't be so afraid to attack a woman,"

My teeth exposed themselves as I yelled back at her. "A real man would never hit a woman. Then again, you're not really a woman,"

Riter chuckled at that and held out her arms as though she were going to embrace me in a loving hug. "Then what am I? A bitch? Hmmm? Is that it? Am I what children fear in the dark? Or am I some kind of fiend? Which is it? Come on, murderer. I want you to say it. Enlighten me!"

"You're scum!" I roared back. "You always have been and I can't believe how long it took me to realize that! All you do is hate and hate doesn't belong in this world. That's why so many have died. Every single drop of blood that has been shed these last moons has all been because of your hate! Well, that ends now! I'll make sure you never kill anybody else. I will kill you!"

In a single instant, I sprinted forward with my claws at the ready. I could tell by the widening of her eyes that Riter was surprised. She wasn't able to react quickly enough before I dug my teeth into the base of her neck and began to rip at her stomach with my claws.

I'm going to win!

Yes. I could feel how little Riter was trying to break free of my hold on her. The wound on her side must have weakened her more than I had thought. It was all finally going to end. The Kyan were going to be saved, I was going to be a hero and Seq wasn't going to die! Everything was going to be fine. Nobody else had to die and, for a moment, I truly felt invincible.

You will be the one who loses the most.

My thoughts of peace ceased and my happiness withered as burning coldness ignited inside of me. Slowly, my jaw loosened its grip on Riter's neck and I looked down to see the Kreq's hand wrapped around the hilt of the knife that was inside me, my knife, the one I had forgotten to take out of its sheath when I threw my other weapons off to the side. *Oh, shit.*

You will be the one who loses the most.

Every part of my body became rock and, as much as I tried to make myself scream or do something, my muscles were deaf to my commands. I was barely even able to breathe.

Riter twisted the knife as she pulled it out of me with her left hand. I stood there, frozen in that one moment, and watch my own blood empty out of me onto the ground. The coldness had already spread to my arms and legs.

My legs gave out and I fell back.

You will be the one who loses the most.

Everything seemed to have slowed down because, in the short amount of time that I fell, I realized the true meaning of the deer goddesses' message.

You will be the one who loses the most.

Taiya hadn't predicted Seq's death. I only inferred that she was. No. She predicted mine.

You will be the one who loses the most.

The snow's embrace was warm compared to the iciness that infected my body. It had now spread to my face, making my cheeks numb. I could feel a lightness beginning to grow inside my head and my vision began to blur.

You will be the one who loses the most.

With all of the sunlight beating down on me, I was barely able to make out Riter, who still stood over me. While I couldn't see her face, I knew she was smiling.

You will be the one who loses the most.

My vision was becoming weaker and weaker. My thoughts even...started becoming...harder and harder.

You will be the one who loses the most.

Ringing...in my...ears...

You will be the one who loses the most.

Seq...I'm...sorry...

You will be the one who loses the most.

I...love...you...

You will be the one who loses the most.