

Roen's Tale

Chapter 12

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“Roen.”

...

“Love.”

...

“Wake up, love.”

As my senses start to return, I realize that someone’s licking my nose, and tears are falling on my face.

“Roen, love, come on, wake up.” It’s Railu, I recognize her voice, and she’s obviously the one crying

Suddenly, a new voice says, “Punctured lung, broken rib, have to fix those now.” This one’s male.

“Roen, it’s me, Railu, I’ve found you. Please love, don’t move. Let me know you’re still with me.”

It takes everything I have, but I manage to groan, “Railu? How?”

I feel her rub my face, “I’d thought I’d lost you.”

“Compound break, upper left arm, Aime set it. Niku, need a splint right here.”

I feel a sharp pain in my arm and can’t help but to cry out. Someone then starts to wrap that arm.

“Keep at it.” His voice is firm, commanding. “Ruptured spleen, repair it.”

I barely notice the warming sensation in my gut, but it soon passes. “His spine’s intact. Just a little more.”

I can’t tell who’s he talking to, but it’s not someone I can hear.

“His right ankle’s shattered. Niku, splint it.” I hear him move, then he calls out, “He can’t walk. We’ll need to lift him up.”

I risk opening my eyes, and see that Railu is indeed leaning over me, still licking my muzzle. I risk a smile and notice that something is being lowered down the side of the cliff. It’s a makeshift stretcher. They’re going to lift me back up.

As a white mink wraps my ankle, the strange looking male places the stretcher alongside me. He looks at it for a moment then turns away and says, "Oana."

After another moment, he says, "Five, wide, two meter long cinch straps." Something flashes, and he starts working on the stretcher.

With a smooth coordinated motion, the male, the mink, and my mate, move me onto the stretcher. I quickly realize that I feel very little pain, but I know better than to try to move.

They tighten straps around me, holding me to the stretcher and then the male leans over me, and says, "We're going to pick you up, try to stay still, keep your arms in, ok?"

Realizing my life is in the hands of someone I don't know and can't even identify by species, I suppress my worry and nod, hoping that if Railu trusts him, I can too.

He looks at Railu, "You better get up there; they'll need your help lifting."

"I'll see you at the top, love." Railu coos, giving me a gentle nuzzle.

I watch her climb up the cliff, using the various roots and rocks as handholds. After she clears the top, I get picked up and leaned against the cliff wall. I get to see just how far up I am, still well above the treetops that hide the canyon floor.

"Are you ready?" the male asks.

Seeing just how lucky I am to have not fallen all the way down, I suppress a shudder. "No," I admit, "but I don't want to stay down here either."

He smiles warmly, even chuckling a little. "Ok. Just try to relax."

"Ready?" Railu calls out from above.

"Ready," He replies. Both he and the white mink duck from view for a moment, apparently picking up lines attached to the stretcher.

I feel the stretcher start to rise, and my heart leaps with fear. Fighting my instincts, I close my eyes and grab hold of the strap across my hips. Like this though, I feel every small thing that happens as they pull me up.

Suddenly I stop, and after a couple up and down motions, an eerily familiar face comes into view. It's one of the lizard people that we ran into.

This one looks at something above me, than at me, and states, "Oana help."

It then reaches above me, and after a moment, I see a root clump fall. After a couple head bobs, and a waive of its arm, I start rising again. It climbs alongside me as I'm lifted, and I find it's 'helpful' presence oddly reassuring.

Once they pull me over the top, they lay me flat again, and I get to see more people. Aside from Railu, there's a cheetess, lion cub, skunk, grey squirrel, a oddly familiar snow leopardess, and a lady sheltie that I've seen back home in Arroket.

Soon the white mink reappears and starts checking the dressings that she's applied. Seeing the pendant hanging around her neck, I relax knowing she's a shaman.

"Are you Niku?" I wearily ask.

"Yes," she answers, "and you're lucky to be alive."

Railu sticks her nose to mine, "What were you thinking, stepping off the cliff like that?"

"At the time, I just wanted to kill what was about to kill me." I gently lick her nose, "Now, I'm just glad to be alive to feel your anger."

"IF YOU..."

“Railu,” the sheltie interrupts. “He is here, you are with him. Be glad of that, not angry of what’s in the past.”

“Arru’s right,” Niku agrees. “Let him heal, and let yourself heal.”

Railu sighs, lies her nose along mine, and whispers, “I’ve missed you.”

I gently lick her cheek, “I’ve missed you too, my love.”

“Come on, let’s get him moved to camp,” someone states. I do my best to look, but all I can tell is that the voice is female.

Before too long, I’m moved from the stretcher to a rather comfortable, if flimsy-looking, chair. Railu walks up to me with a short pole that she expands into another chair. I find this interesting, but she’s obviously used to it. She sits next to me and nuzzles into me.

Being overly curious about my rescuers, I watch as the skunk and squirrel start setting food out on a table, that they keep getting out of a strange looking container. They’ll put their finger on a black spot, say something, and more food appears in a flash of light. I quickly realize that this must be what the male used when he needed the straps.

I lean on Railu and quietly ask, “What is that?”

She softly giggles, and says, “Kyle calls it a mater energy converter. Says it uses the light from the sun to make food. I don’t really understand it, but it works.”

I nod and watch the young doe and lion setup a few more tables, which I mistake for chairs at first as they look so much alike.

Unexpectedly, the cheetess and a white cat sit the male in a chair next to me. From his expression, I’d guess he’s not happy about it but he doesn’t get back up.

The young doe sets a couple drinks on a table near us. She smiles and nods, “I’m Fey.”

“Hello Fey, I’m...”

“...Roen, we know.” She glances at Railu and smiles, “She’s told us a lot about you.”

I simply smile and nod, not really knowing what else to say to the young girl. She nods and continues passing out drinks, even setting a large bowl on the ground for the lizard girl.

Seeing the white cat’s hands move, I watch her for a moment and notice that she’s looking at the male near me. He makes some signs back, apparently talking with each other.

She suddenly bends down and nuzzles into him, and he holds her to him for a moment. After another exchange of signs, the cat gasps silently, and looks toward the sheltie, Arru, and the lizard girl, as they set the stretcher down. I hadn’t noticed them leave, but I know who’s on the stretcher; Amsel.

Railu gasps at the sight, also shocked, getting everybody else’s attention. They all fall silent for a moment, looking at Amsel’s covered body.

“I’m...sorry.” Railu quietly says.

I sigh, saddened by the sight of my friend, “I’m sorry too,” I confesses. “I should have never left. I never believed the stories like he did.”

“You believed in him, and that was enough for you. I cannot blame you for that, but I could blame you for leaving me behind, that was *your* choice.”

"I know, and I regret it," I confess sadly. Then remembering what we did for Rami and Sarn, I add, "Not to change the subject, but we need to get him buried soon, his beliefs and all."

"Manenic?" Arru asks.

"Yeah, I don't believe myself, but he was my friend, I'll respect his wishes."

"I am familiar with the burial needs," She states, "I will make the preparations."

"Thank you." I looks around, finally seeing everyone in the group. I look at my mate, "Did you put all this together to come after me?"

"Well, that was what I wanted to do, but he was already heading this way, so I tagged along with him."

I turn to the male, and realize just what he is. "Y...you...you're a...human?"

He smiles and nods, "Yeah."

"But, legend says you're all gone."

"And yet here I sit." His comment I find humorous, but draws a jab from the white cat. "Ow!" he says.

She makes some furious gestures, confusing me for a moment. "You certainly don't act like the humans I've heard about," I state.

Arru walks up, carrying a small bottle and a pouch. "That's because he is not one of *those* humans, even if he has some of there abilities."

I look up at her, still confused. "What do you mean?"

"What she means," he explains, "is just like there's a difference between yours, Railu's, and Arru's personalities, there's a difference between each human's. We all think and act differently, and have our own personalities."

Knowing he's right, I can't help but argue, "But from the stories, they all seemed...emotionless."

"Well, from I learned, they were researchers. So, I'd bet their indifference was really them trying to remain objective."

His comment makes me think. "That does change a lot of things about them." I suddenly realize that in that context, he's right. "Actually, it makes a lot of sense."

He smiles as he continues, "I'm not a researcher, I'm more like a...searcher. I was looking for a place I felt I fit in. In our pursuit of you, I realized that I already found a group of people who I fit in with." The white cat suddenly nuzzles his neck, purring, making him chuckle. The cheetess also gives him a bump, and he returns her affection. "Some more than others."

Fey and the skunk bring over several plates of food and pass them around. We continue talking while we eat, each taking turns introducing our selves, telling me a little of their journey.

After lunch is over, Kotu, the lion cub, surprises me with a crutch he made. Seeing the effort and skill he put into it, I warmly thank him for it, and take to using it instantly.

We then see to Amsel's burial. Unable to dig through the rocky surface, we find a suitable place near the rock wall, and cover him with stones. Arru performs the service, and then she, Railu, and I each collect a tuft of our fur, dip an end in the bottle of sap and stick it to the larger stone marker that Oana helped place. I then uses a black rock to write Amsel's name on it.

I stand there silently for a moment, trying to figure out what to say. Finally, something comes to mind, "I'm sorry you never got to the Dig, but I thank you. You helped me find what's really important." I look at Railu, "Family." She gently nuzzles into me with tears in her eyes.

Returning to camp in silence, most of us spend the rest of the day relaxing. Tria, the skunk, spends some time on lessons with Fey and Kotu. Arru sits with Oana, the lizard girl, trying to teach her some more words. Sada, the white cat, curls up in a chair and takes a nap. Tayla, the cheetess, sits on Kyle's lap, curling up with her head under his chin. He, in-turn, holds her close, enjoying the moment.

Curious as to how both Sada and Tayla both behave towards him, I can help but ask, "So...you have two mates?"

He visibly thinks for a moment while looking at Sada, who's curled up in a chair. "Well, yes and no," he finally states. "Tayla, here, is a mate to me like Railu is to you. With Sada, it's a little harder to explain. She's more than a friend, or companion, like a mate would be, but she's not a mate. She is happy to be with me, knowing that I care for her like she cares for me." He scowls for a moment, then asks, "Does that make sense?"

"She's a soul mate," Tayla states.

"Yes, that would be a better way to describe it, thank you." He give her a kiss on her head and she nuzzles into him.

Knowing the only true reason to have a mate is to have children, my curiosity gets the better of me. "Can you have children, together?"

"Roen!" Railu scolds me.

Kyle interrupts her "It's ok. Yes, we can."

"And we want to." Tayla purrs.

Railu look at me lovingly, rubbing her nose on mine. "And now that we're together again, so can we." She coos.

Remembering where we are, and what I went through to get here, I look wearily at her, "Would that be a good idea, being out here in the Wilds?"

She smiles softly, "Aside from Kyle, you've had the worst injuries yet, and you're still here too. Together, there's nothing we can't handle."

Finding her tone reassuring, I softly say, "Very optimistic of you." I gently lick her nose and pull her close with my good arm. Suddenly curious about his ordeal, I ask, "How bad were you hurt?"

His face reddens as he smiles, "Karnesh slapped me with its tail, threw me into a tree hard enough to knock the tree down, broke my back, three ribs, and cracked my skull, and I was wearing my armor at the time. It took Aime three days to fix me."

Not having heard the name before, I ask, "Who's Aime?"

"She's..." He stops suddenly, thinking.

Railu picks up for him, "If you think of him like a shaman, Aime is the spirit that helps him."

"I'm not a shaman," he states.

"No, you're not." Tayla agrees. "You're better."

He sigh heavily and roll his eyes, giving me the impression that that's an ongoing argument. Letting that go, and worried about my own condition, I ask, "How bad was I hurt?"

“You *had* a broken rib, punctured lung, and a ruptured spleen. You still have a broken arm, shattered ankle, and a concussion, and of course the cuts and scrapes.”

I can’t help but be surprised by his statement. “It sounds like I should feel more pain than I do.”

“The first thing Aime did was to block most of the pain. She didn’t block it all because you need to be aware of where you’re hurt. It’ll wear off in a day or two.”

A couple days, that’s not along time for my many remaining wounds to heal. “Will I be healed by then?”

He nods, “When Aime has enough energy, we’ll fix you up some more. I won’t let you suffer.”

We continue talking for the rest of the say. I’m glad that he’s not a private person and he readily answers my questions, which happen to be mostly about the converter, chairs and tables, all of which he says he collected from what other humans left behind.

Despite finding all this interesting, I soon start to tire. Kyle and my mate help me into the very large tent, and lie me down on a bed, something I haven’t slept on in several months.

He takes a step back as Railu and Niku start taking my armor off of me. With that aside, Niku starts changing or adjusting my bandages, while Kyle puts his hands over my head. That warming sensation returns for a while, and my headache eases.

When he pulls his hands away, he says, “This is about all I can do tonight, Aime’s still low on energy, but it’s safe for you to sleep now.”

Wanting to say so much, but lacking the energy and the words, I simply say, “Thank you.”

He nods, and I can tell he understands. “You’re welcome, but you really should be thanking your mate. If it wasn’t for her nose, we may not have found you in time.”

Feeling a bit proud, I looks to Railu, “You finished your training?”

She bows her head, ashamed, “No, I did not.”

There’s a slight moment of awkward silence before Kyle adds, “It turns out that she’s a natural at tracking.”

I smile, letting whatever that was go by. “So, you take after your mother after all.”

She smiles and confesses, “As much as I didn’t want to, I’m glad of that now.”

Niku interrupts, “Ok, try not to roll over, it will disturb the medicine in your wounds, you need that to help you heal.” She looks at Railu, “He needs his rest, please make sure that he gets it.”

Railu nods and Niku leaves the room. Railu then looks at me with a smile I recognize. Hearing Kyle sigh, I realize that he too, knows what she wants. “Go *easy* on him, he still needs to heal.”

I can’t help but smile, as I pull her close. Kyle steps back and closes the curtain, giving us what privacy he can. Railu quickly takes off her armor and snuggles up to me.

“We need to talk.”

Her tone tells me I’m in trouble, which at this point, I don’t mind. “About?”

She smiles, letting me know it’s not as bad as I think. “Niva. What are your plans for her?”

I sigh, and for some reason, start to giggle. “I never planned on that to happen. Rami hit on her, and I...I just wanted to talk. Apparently that’s what she wanted too.”

“I spent the better part of the day talking to her. I know what she wanted, and what you gave her.” Her voice takes on a more sultry tone as she says, “and right now, that’s what I want too.”

I sniff her gently, and find that her scent is ripening, she’s in estrus. A small part of me finds this odd, since it’s not that time of the month. The rest of me, however, doesn’t care. I’ve been without her too long, and I want to fix that.