

## CHAPTER 1

It was morning. The brown curtains on my bedroom window were open, the sun rays were gently caressing my face. Warm and delightful. At this very moment, I felt sad for those who have to get up before sun rise to go to work. We all choose our own destiny and me, I made sure that my future involved getting up to work when my body doesn't need sleep anymore. Some may call this irresponsibility. Some may say "That's not how the world works!". Maybe not your world. But mine does. I could wake up early if I had to, don't get me wrong, I'm a professional too. I just didn't want it to be an everyday thing.

And that particular day was not a very busy day and there was no rush. My bed sheets were way too comfortable not to enjoy them a little longer.

I closed my eyes and tried to go back to this sweet dream that I had woken up from. I was in a park I think... I remember the green grass and the trees, the sun and the sky... There was this... girl... I guess? It was blurry, but they had feminine features, I could distinguish a long fluffy tail and long pointy ears...

Everything around me was clear except this female looking someone.

And I remember the feeling I had... of well being, of inner peace, like if I belonged there, with her, like we were one as a whole.

I wanted to go back. I needed to feel that peace again. I needed to see her face...

... ..

Damn it. It was no use. The sun was too bright in my bedroom and my body definitely didn't need anymore rest. That's the down side of having that kind of work schedule. When you're awake you can't go back to sleep!... First World Country problem much? Yeah I think so.

Anyway, despite the fact that I was working from home and was my own boss, I still had work to do. I had to finish this sword I've been commissioned. I worked on it until late the night before, I thought I could have finished it before going to bed but, like said, I'm a professional and when I realized I wasn't on top of my game, I just went to bed. There wasn't a lot to do left anyway.

I finally got up and walked to my window. My home was built in a new development area and the view was just stunning! A large grass field, blue sky, and the mountains... I opened the window. I could hear my neighbours talking and laughing... I took a moment to just stand there and enjoy the beauty of what was in front of me.

The time was somewhere between 10 and 11 am and a fresh breeze ran through my hair, tickling my whiskers. I smiled. Every so often, someone would walk pass my window from the bakery, bringing with them a sweet and buttery scent.

I had moved there 5 years ago from a much larger city where I also worked as a blacksmith in a huge workshop. I mostly made sword. That was my speciality! But this stressful life just made me unhappy in the end. I had to leave for some place quieter where I could just, you know.. live? Well I could say that it was one of the best decision I had made in my entire life.

Beautiful dream, beautiful day, and about to finished a beautiful sword... this day shown itself to be amazing! And now, work!

I had built my workshop in the garage, since it came with the house and I had no car. I wouldn't

be happy in a closed workshop, so despite the lack of windows, the huge garage doors balanced it out. I could see what was going on outside and talk to people walking. I had made my place here perfectly during those past 5 years. I had lots of clients as I was probably the best blacksmith around!

Arrived in my workshop, I discovered the huge mess I had left from the night before (or "organized chaos", as I would call it. Cuter!). I didn't remember how terrible it was though! It made me smile. Cause this was my life and it was perfect. Beautiful day in an amazing city full of friend and a messy workshop. I couldn't wish for anything more!

I unlocked the garage door and opened it. Already people were wishing me a good morning. Those people were so friendly!

With this smile always on my face, I started to put the finishing touches to the sword.

It was an amazing one-handed sword. The blade was made with the best steel there was on the land. I had a few swirl lines to engrave on the blade before installing the handle. A magnificent royal blue leather handle.

This was most certainly one of my best work! And I had made a lot of swords in my life. For a moment I wished I could keep it for myself.

A month earlier, while I was working on axes for some guards, this tall feline man appeared in front of me. I was probably too focused on what I was doing, didn't hear nor saw him arriving. He was very well formally dressed. With a top hat and a cane. Very classy! He must have been new in town because I didn't remember having seen him before.

Anyway, he explained to me very precisely what he wanted and he gave me a bag of money. I truly had never seen that much money. It was probably for something very important. Like a world threatening quest or something.

I was then putting the blue leather and gold handle on the sword. What a masterpiece. I almost shed a tear right there!

It was a little bit after diner time. I could have delivered the sword at this very moment, but I decided to keep it until the next day, so I can admire the work a little bit longer. I placed it on my living room wall and went out for a drink. It was maybe still a bit early for that but I wanted to spoil myself a little bit.

I went for a shower. For me, even a quick shower lasts more than 20 minutes. I don't get how people can wash all their body and fur in less than 10 minutes. I love just feeling the hot water all over me, flowing through my fire-orange fur, making my few black arm tiger-like stripes look funny. I must have been one of the rare feline who actually enjoyed water that much! I used my favorite soap. It smelled like honey and caramel. I liked to stay in the shower until all my body was warm and relaxed.

Then I headed to my room to get ready. I chose a pair of blue jeans, my favorite t-shirt, of a nice dark green, and a paler shade of green shirt. I put some hair gel in my brown hair and tried to make it look nice. I loved long hair, but I couldn't keep my hair too long because of my work, so I

opted for a 4 inches long semi-mohawk. My hair had some red-ish luminous shine in it. All my fur and hair looked like fire. That's probably the reason why my parents called me Blaze. That, and the flame-looking pattern of black fur I had in my back.

A final look at myself in the mirror. Yup, all set!

My favorite pub was a bit far from home but it was totally worth it. I enjoyed walking in the streets, so the distance between my home and the pub wasn't bothering me much. It could take this time to empty my head and meditate. My feet knew the way. I was looking right in front of me, the people laughing, the birds singing and the kids screaming in playground was music to my ears.

The sun was slowly setting as I arrived to the Steamed pub. A steampunk themed pub with an amazing atmosphere! It opened last year and it has become very popular within a few weeks! I don't know why but people, myself included, seem to have this thing for steampunk stuff.

There were about 10 fursions in the pub but my eyes noticed this long purple and furless tail attached to this sharky body sitting at the bar. Shaka. This elegant yet bad ass shark. We have met each other at the opening night of the Steam Pub. She was wearing a steampunk kind of overalls, googles on her red hair, long leather boots and a cane. Ah! She was something! You couldn't miss her! She saw me looking at her and found it funny that I just couldn't get my eyes off her. She came to talk to me and everything started!

But now, she was wearing much more casual clothes. A cute black tank top and a skirt. She was sipping her drink with a straw and didn't saw me arriving but as I walked toward her, she raised her head, looked at me and smirked.

-Hey you! It's been a while.... Where were you?

-Yeah I know, I've been quite busy lately. The sword I was telling you about?

-Yeah I remember, I wondered if you didn't die impaled on it somewhere..

(nice....)

-No I actually finished it today. It's one piece of art I tell ya!

-Oh I believe you my friend. Now come here, I'm offering you a drink, you deserve it. Hey! Waiter! A nice vodka for my friend here!

I sat beside her. I was a bit tired from all the work but at the same time, quite relaxed to be here. She was sipping her weird pink drink without a word as I slowly drank mine. She was drawing stuff in a small notepad. She was usually a lot more talkative, but I didn't dare asking what was wrong. I'm pretty bad at comforting people. The vodka felt warm in my throat. It felt good. I But the silence was definitely awkward... I kinda had no choice but say something... I ended up asking her :

-What's wrong? You're rather quiet...

-Yeah... lost my job.

-Oh shit.. I'm sorry...

-Yeah what can I do. The company is not doing that well lately, it was just a matter of time. I saw

it coming.

-What are you gonna do now?....

She kept quiet.

I drank a mouthful of vodka. Maybe I shouldn't have asked. Maybe she didn't know and was freaking out. She was playing with her pencil, still quiet. I drank again. She was holding her pencil vertically with one finger, lead down. It looked like she was staring at something that wasn't there..

I drank again.

She slowly left her finger from the pencil and... it didn't fall down.

For a few seconds, the pencil was holding this position by itself.

Go home gravity, you're drunk!

Or was it me who was definitely drunk? I gasped and the pen fell down. Shaka was still looking at it like nothing happened.

I asked :

-What the hell was that?

She looked at me, no emotions in her eyes. Then got up, put money on the counter for the waiter (she paid my drink) and said :

-Gotta go. Have a good night mate.

She left.

Well that was weird. I stayed there by myself for a little while before finishing my drink and agreeing that it was probably time to go to bed for me too. People were gathering in the Steam slowly, but I was now exhausted and I had to be well-rested for tomorrow, to meet my big client.

I do not stand alcohol very well and my whole body already felt kinda numb from the vodka. I stood up, wished the waiter a good night and left.

On my way home, I couldn't stop thinking about the pencil... did I just see what I thought I saw? No pen could ever stay in this position without falling... Did I imagine that? Was it my brain playing tricks on me? Maybe I really shouldn't drink...

It was not even midnight and the streets were already full of life. It was like if the city had 2 lives : one from 8am to 6pm and the other from 11pm to 3 am. The moon was bright in the sky, the street lamps created a smooth atmosphere and the town's people were happily greeting their friends. We could hear music, people singing, it distracted me from the weird Shaka stuff a little bit. I was walking and I felt a nice inner peace. This was my home, where I belonged. The kind of same feeling I had in that dream. That day started like heaven but that night was weird and I felt sad for my friend Shaka. I had no idea how I could help. I hated feeling useless like this. I tried to meditate a bit during my walk home, but I was too tired.

I finally reached home.

As I opened the door, it was very dark.. and cold. I went inside and tried to open the lights, but didn't work. I had a look outside to see if my neighbour had lights (blackouts can occur) but they did have lights. I had a strange and unpleasant feeling. Went back inside.

-Hello? I called.

Silence.

It was like entering an old haunted house. But it was MY house. My home, my sanctuary. I didn't feel safe anymore.

I tried the lights again.... nothing.

And then it struck me... Did someone break into my house? Was I been robbed? Oh no, THE SWORD!!!

I ran to the living room... it took me a few seconds but it felt like an eternity! My body was overflowing me with the worse feelings ever all at once and I was thinking about all the work I've put on that sword, how I would explain to the client that I wasn't careful enough and that, selfishly, I kept the sword longer to admire it I could never do such work again, how my entire reputation was destroyed, I was about to hit the nervous breakdown when I arrived in my living room.

The sword was there. On my wall. Moon-rays all around it. And it was beautiful.

At this very moment, I would have fell on the floor crying of relief if I hadn't been full of adrenalin.

I slowly walked toward the sword. I forgot about the creepy feeling of earlier. None could feel scared and unsafe in front of this beauty. My finger gently touched the blade and as I looked at it, I saw a weird reflexion in the perfectly forged blade. It was moving. Behind me. I turned around and before I could have a good look of what it was, I was knocked down and I hit my head on the wall.

When I opened my eyes a few seconds after, in pain, I saw it, flying above me, screaming of a cry I had never heard before. The kind of cry that gets you to the bones and makes you shiver from the inside.

I couldn't see precisely what was attacking me, as it was still very dark. It looked like a shadow or smoke creature, with what seemed to be a long tail and wings. Its cry was turning my blood to ice, and as it came to attack me against, I used of all the strength I had left to roll over and avoid it. I had to fight or I would die right here, right now. I was looking around quickly to decide what to do when I saw the magnificent blade shining. I had no choice. I took the sword with both hand and got ready to defend myself. The creature was flying in circle near the ceiling. What the heeeeeelllll!!!

I swung the sword to hit the creature but it was like if I was trying to hit a ghost, its "body" was just moving around my sword. It became more aggressive trying to hit me and bite me, I think it had teeth, sharp teeth, but it was hard to see. I was defending myself with the sword (who was incredibly light, I really did an awesome job! At this very second I was rather proud of myself and

almost got hit by the flying thingy there!)

"Stay focused damn it!!"

It screamed (\*shudder\*), and took a run-up towards me, with what seemed to be its mouth wide open. I swung my (amazing!) sword and I felt a hit! I touched it! It probably materialized itself to get me! Now it was screaming and flying everywhere for a few seconds before it disappeared completely.

I stood there, alone in the middle of my living room, like an idiot, with my sword in hand. There was some sorts of pinkish fluid on the blade. The lights went on. By themselves. it felt like home again.

There had been definitely enough weird stuff for one night. I cleaned the blade and decided to go to bed.

I felt empty. I sat on my bed, with my work beside me. It would not left me until I delivered it. I couldn't sleep. I just sat on my bed and looked at the moon, full and bright. My head wasn't thinking anymore. I felt like a zombie. Looking at the moon. My eyes suddenly closed themselves...