



WOLFEN

PART 2



WOLFEN SHADOW

As Verik stumbled through the forest, he noticed that it was getting easier to walk the farther he went. The trembling in his legs were gone and his weakness was dissipating. He was actually starting to become energetic even, and the energy just increased with every step he took.

He heard the voice in the distance calling to him again, "Verik."

With every step he took toward that voice, not only was he getting stronger, but the environment was changing also. The trees were becoming noticeably taller and wider and the grass was getting much greener. Looking ahead a while, he saw a strange blue light shining through the leaves.

He continued forward, but stopped when he saw a wall blocking his path. The wall was made out of the thick branch growth of the trees, naturally growing out and weaving together to form a barrier that was so tight, that you could barely see through it. The wall went as high as the trees, which were quite tall. He tried walking around the wall, but it seemed to be going on for quite a while.

Verik sighed, he would have to climb it if he wanted to reach the other side. He reached out his arm to grab the surface, but just as his hand made contact with it, the branches started moving on their own. He jerked his hand back in surprise and watched with increasing fascination. The branches were pulling back, separating themselves from the others, forming a doorway that was just tall enough for him to fit through.

He stepped through it and was breathless when he saw what was on the other side. The blue light that he saw earlier was coming from these large glowing mushrooms growing everywhere. Many of them grew bigger than he was. The light they emitted was as bright as a fire, if not more. It illuminated the entire area as if the sun was shining down here. The trees here were especially magnificent. The branch growth on them were so thick, that he could not tell how tall they were. They completely blocked out the sky almost as effectively as the wall he just passed through. There were many vines hanging down from the tree with blossoms blooming from them.

The sight was breathtaking, but that was not the most amazing sight. To his right, there was a fox sitting on a rock looking down at her little cubs who were playing around with the vines hanging down; leaping at them, biting them. But the extraordinary thing was that the vines were playing too. They would pull away from the away from the baby foxes while one of them slipped behind and grab them and they would repeat. And they were all fine with it, like this was a normal thing for them. They noticed him standing there, but they just ignored him. They were not scared or unnerved by his presence at all. Had he stepped into some kind of paradise?

He stood there watching him play for a few minutes, chuckling quietly. He probably would have stayed there longer if he was not interrupted.

"Verik." The voice called out again, urging him to move along.

He tore his gaze from the foxes and continued onward toward the voice. As he walked, the trees moved themselves out of his way forming a path. He walked slowly, not wanting to rush past the wonderful beauty of it all.

The path suddenly stopped at a cliff. On the other side, the trees parted just like before, but he did not see any clear way to cross the space. He paused at the edge, waiting for something to reveal its path to him, but nothing happened. There were no fallen trees or anything that he could use as a bridge.

In the distance, some movement caught his eye. There was a deer walking up to the cliff without slowing as if it did not see the drop, but just as its hoof was falling on the open space, a huge vine burst from the cliff, wrapping around itself, creating a bridge just ahead of the deer's hooves as it crossed.

Amazed and still a little nervous, he decided to imitate what he saw. He took a step off the cliff. He lowered his foot down cautiously, but he could not bring himself to actually take the step while watching. He closed his eyes and pretended that there was solid ground in front of him and then he took the step. He heard a slight noise underneath him and his foot landed on a surface. Opening his eyes and looking down, vines were forming a path for him just like it had for the deer. He slowly took another step and the vines followed. He laughed in amazement as he picked up his pace and crossed over to the other side. When both feet were firmly on the other side, the vines retreated back into the walls that they emerged from.

He followed it onward for a few more minutes until he reached another wall of branches, only this time the top was lined with sharp edges, poking through. This one was obviously could not be climbed. Like before, he reached out and gently touched the wall and it opened up and created an opening, but this wall was different. It was much thicker. It had to be at least fifty arm-lengths wide. He stepped through the tunnel it created and immediately after he was inside, it started closing behind him.

It was almost like this wall was protecting something; preventing anyone or anything from climbing, and being so thick. He was anxious to see what was on the other side of this wall. When he finally emerged on the other side, the sight that met him was more magnificent than anything else he saw on his short journey here.

He was in an almost perfectly circular area. The ground was covered by deep water that was so still, it looked as though it was made of glass. In the very center, there was a small island and on it grew a massive tree. It was so thick that it probably would have taken maybe twenty others holding hands to go all the way around it. The trunk was lined with glowing plants and the branches were blossoming with brilliant blue and purple flowers.

A bridge formed from the wall, over the water, and over to the island. Verik slowly walked across it and approached the massive tree. Now that he was standing right next to it, he could feel that the energy that was steadily growing inside him was coming from this tree. Somehow it was emanating it and he felt it surging through him now. He felt like he had the strength to tear the tree from the ground with his hands.

Again, the magical voice called out his name. It came from somewhere near the tree. He walked around to the back to see if anyone was there, but it was empty.

"Hello?" Verik called out. His voice was deep and powerful. "Is anyone here?" There was no reply. He sniffed the air, trying to catch the scent of whoever was here. The only scents that he could detect were the water, the plants, the air; but there was no living creature within these walls that his nose could detect. Maybe they found a way to mask their scent? Whatever they were doing, they were definitely not on the ground with him. They probably climbed into the tree.

He looked around once more before he grabbed the tree to climb it, but when his hand made contact, he felt the energy flow from the tree directly into him. A sudden dizziness flooded his head and

he fell. Or, at least, he thought he fell. When he opened his eyes, he was standing upright with his hands on the tree.

"That was strange..." Verik said to himself. He shook his head and got ready to climb again. He pulled himself up one step when he heard the voice again. This time it was almost directly behind him.

"So, you finally made it here." He recognized the voice instantly as the one that had been calling his name all this time.

Verik let go of the tree, dropped the short distance back to the ground, and turned around. Standing in front of him was a female creature much like himself. Well, like the creature back in the shelter in the clearing. It was actually very different than him. When he looked at himself, he was unnerved and horrified, but looking at her, he felt instantly comforted and peaceful.

Her body was covered in pure white fur. There were no spots, stripes, or patches of any other color. From her back, two huge wings spread fully out. Her deep blue eyes looked comfortingly at him and a gentle smile played on her mouth. Her ears stood straight up in authority, but not threateningly.

Verik had no memory of his past before this day, but he was pretty sure that she was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen. His voice trembled in awe and amazement as he asked, "Who are you?"

An amused look spread across her face. "My name is Vannah. I am..." she paused as if looking for the right word. "You could say that I am the protector or guardian of this world."

The guardian of the world? What could she possibly want him for? Unsure of if he was supposed to bow or anything in her presence, he just looked down at the ground and said, "You lead me here. Why?"

"Keep your head up, Verik. That isn't necessary." She scolded softly. When he looked up at her, she continued, "I do not live among your world physically. I cannot directly interact with anything in it. However, this area has a certain energy flowing from it, as you have most definitely have witnessed yourself. At this location, I can project myself into the minds of others. That is why I needed you to come here." Seeing the look of further confusion on his face, she let out a small laugh. "I called you here for a very special reason." She became very serious, "I have called you here to give you a very urgent warning. There is an evil coming to your world, and it is very powerful. If it is not stopped, this world could be destroyed."

Verik's confusion just kept increased. Will things ever clear up? "I'm sorry, but what does that have to do with me? What am I supposed to do?"

Her expression softened. "I have not only come to you to give you a warning, but also a gift. I need to imbue someone with the power needed to lead armies against the evil forces and take them down. I have chosen you to be that one."

Shocked, Verik asked, "Why me? I have no memory of my past. I know next to nothing about anything. I don't even know who I am!"

Vannah walked up to him, the feathers on her wings rustling gracefully with each step forward. She put a hand on Verik's shoulder. "I know you are already confused, and this is a lot to try to take in

and understand, but those are the precise reasons why I have chosen you. You are naturally physically strong. That I can tell just by looking at you. I can see from your mind, that you are mentally, emotionally, and morally strong as well. But most important of all, your memory loss. You have suffered tragedy in your past life. Great tragedy, but those events do not break you like they would others. You have no recollection of those events, so you can essentially start again. You can create who you are all over again. You can become the leader that will save this world from the evil armies."

Verik stood there in silence for a few moments, breathing in all that was just told to him. "So, you think I can do it? I can save the world?"

She laughed again, "My task is to protect this world at all costs. And I will try with all my might to make sure that I do not fail. I do not just think that you can do it. I know you can."

"You said that I experienced tragedy before. Do you know what happened to me?"

"As much as I would love to do so, I do not have the time to explain everything to you. I need to fulfill my task and then leave, but your friends should be able to tell you what you need to know."

"My friends?" Verik asked her. He had no memory of friends.

"You woke up in their camp. They took care of you for a long time." Vannah held out her right hand, palm upwards. In the center of it, a long, thin crystal shard materialized. It glowed a bright blue color and his body instantly felt more alive at its presence, just like the tree. She gripped his shoulder firmly with her left hand. "Are you ready, Verik?"

He looked at the crystal hesitantly, "Ready for what exactly?"

Before answering him and before he could react, she slammed the crystal into his chest. Verik staggered backwards. A burning sensation pulsated from the point of contact. It was painful, but it was not agonizing. It actually felt oddly pleasant. He felt the power spread from his chest throughout the rest of him. He collapsed to the ground, his body not knowing how to process this change.

Vannah knelt down beside him and looked into his eyes. "I wish for you the best of luck, Verik." She said gently. Then she started to fade away along with the rest of the world around him until everything was black.