

A Lonely decision

The three tailed fox ran around thick trees, through narrow passageways, and up and down small hills. The trees were getting thicker and although it was getting more difficult to maneuver through thick bushes and roots, Zen believed he was out of sight of Richter. The sky was blocked by leaves but small lights beamed through the narrow spaces giving light to this seemingly dark forest. Even if Richter could fly he'd have to be above the trees and look down, which would have made it impossible to see Zen, especially if he changed his fur color to green to match his surroundings. He couldn't fly too close to the ground because his wings were too big and it'd be difficult to soar through. There was no way he could walk or run through the forest without being heard. The river of branches, the clouds of bushes, and the rumbling dirt on the ground would have given him away. Zen ducked down and hid in a nearby bush, sat perfectly still and waited, listening.

This thickness of the forest made the wind echo throughout the roots. Zen was breathing slowly, but he heard nothing that would cause for alarm. He looked back where he ran but no one was following him.

I hope Artemis is safe, though Zen. He should have followed me. I can fight but why do I feel so....scared.

The white sounds of random animal callings, wing rushing through leave and hollow openings, and unseen rocks moving down hill was interrupted by a faint beeping in the distance. Zen listened but the disadvantage of not seeing where the sound echoed from made him more anxious. He calmed down, took a deep breath and imaged his next move like he did before. He stared in one direction and imaged he could see through it. The ashes that hovered around him began to infuse into his eyes, heightening his vision. Zen could now see past the tress like x ray binoculars. The beeping stopped for a moment and Zen looked around furiously trying to find Richter.

"I DON'T INTEND TO PLAY GAMES BOY!" Richter shouted through the forest as one by one tress fell over like dominos, cut in half with ease by Richter's twin swords, falling abruptly into one another. The sudden change in atmosphere aroused Zen to panic and he continued running through the forest. He shot a glance behind him and saw Richter cutting trees in half with one sword while the other held a radar beeping.

At that moment Zen knew there was no point in hiding since he could be easily found and decided to get more creative in his escape. He imaged another catapult and shot himself clean into the air. Richter followed without losing distance. Zen emerged through the thick branches

and for a moment soared in the air. Despite his life being in danger he was strangely enjoying the view. The hundreds to thousands of miles of trees was a beautiful sight and the peace of temporarily staying in the forest shot through Zen's thoughts over being hunted.

Richter burst out and charged for another attack. Zen saw him coming and raised his left hand up. The leaves from the trees began to shoot up following the big opening caused by Zen then Richter. Richter swiftly moved out of the way but a leaf cut his wing, removing a feather. Richter was shocked for a moment but hurried his attention towards the fox. The leaves circled under Zen's feet making a small platform for him stand on as he hovered himself.

They both stared at each.

"It seems you're not entirely weak after all," said the hawk, his voice calm and old. "That's good, it will be more of a challenge to kill you. More fun for me at least."

Zen tilted his head. He stared at Richter until his head hurt. Zen made mental connection.

"You see killing me as fun?" Zen questioned.

Richter's eyes widened with surprise as he heard the fox's words in his head.

"You can read minds huh?" He asked his body tense, gripping his swords tighter.

"No, at least I don't think so, haven't tried it."

Richter's eyes widen with determination, bloodlust, and a bit of fear. "I won't give you the chance too!"

As the hawk flew at his target, Zen began to move. Zen stood firmly on the leaves but propelled himself farther away from Richter. It was now an aerial chase. Zen managed to get a good distance away from him. Despite Richter's incredible flying speed; Zen was only a short percent faster. With his mind in a state of panic, and his heart pounding and the sheer thought of getting

captured and killed, the adrenaline in his body went to his head and made his speed go faster. Richter was annoyed but didn't panic, he was calm but stern. He gripped his swords and one of them flickered while the other started to glow.

He made a grunt and brought his sword down for a strike, appearing to attack air. However, the wave of his attack sent a blast of fire energy, which moved through the air in the shape of a curved attack. Zen maneuvered around it but almost lost his footing. After losing his balance, he looked back to see another attack was after him. After a moment of shock and panic, Zen fell off his small floating leaves, about to plummet back into the deep woods. The blast missed him but those few seconds Zen wasn't focusing gave Richter the attack of opportunity. He raced down just a bit below Zen would fall and launched himself straight, ready to hit Zen dead on as the moment he fell collided with his blades.

Zen looked to his side and saw the bird coming. In one of Richter's hands his sword emitted electricity; the sound rivaled a thousand chirping birds, but the intense hissing of electricity against steel was sure to cut and roast the insides of whoever was cut clean through. The other sword was set ablaze but the steel didn't melt. He flew directly at the falling fox, crossing his arms to make a V shaped pattern as the attack was about to land.

Zen, trying to think on the spot, began spinning sideways in mid air. Forgetting he could levitate himself in this moment of crisis, he spanned rapidly until he looked like a spinning top. Richter did not falter and charged head strong. Upon seconds of contact, Zen's three tails had grown an incredible length. The two blades slowly reached his tail's fur and his tails turned to steel themselves.

Zen quickly maneuvered to curl himself into a ball in an attempt to shield his body. However, the blades still clashed. The A big ball of steel deadlocked with the twin elemental swords.

"You are growing more irritable," Richter growled. "Now you're make killing you such a chore."

He gritted his swords and pushed harder. Under his breath he chanted something inaudible to Zen and suddenly the power of his elemental blades increased. In seconds Zen was engulfed in flames. Zen emerged from his ball, silently shrieking from the pain of the sword. Richter seized it and aimed to slice Zen in half through the side. Zen's body reacted suddenly and out of ashes came a small but powerful shield on his body where the blade made contact, protecting him.

Richter's eyes grew furious at having to work harder at killing a kid fox but the impact of the blade and his own strength sent Zen flying away by force alone. Zen flew in the air still ablaze but it wasn't the end of his treatment.

Richter aimed his flaming sword at the defenseless fox, pulled it back, and after thrusting it forward, a massive blast of pure red colored fire shot out of the tip of the blade. The young fox took a direct hit from the flames. His screams of silent agony could not leave his lips but his thoughts echoed in his head the pain he felt. The blast carried him far into the distance, sending him flying through the sky like a shooting star. It felt as though the flames seeped into the skin, burning his veins, boiling his blood, and roasting his bones. Slowly the burnt fox began to descend to the ground unaware his surrounds.

He hit the ground in a hard crash. The flames dissipated but the fox was, for a moment, out cold. His fur was still intact except for small bruises and burnt areas. He coughed up smoke but lay motionless on the ground, barely breathing, gasping for air and silently pleaded for cold water to wash down the marrow of his bones that felt incinerated. Any inch he moved was enough pain to go around his entire body. After a few seconds of just sitting there he managed to open his eyes and look to the sky. The white clouds were still visible but night was surely coming. The setting sun in the distance was gorgeous as the shadows of the endless sea of trees covered each other, blanketing for the darkness of night.

Slowly he turned his head, despite the signals in his body telling him to stay still. He looked into the distance and marveled at the forest again, figuring that when sun dies, so will he.

Richter flew down and gently landed on the ground. Zen was a few feet away from cliff, where at the bottom was a mystery covered in trees. He walked to him triumphantly, as if finally catching his prey after hunting and chasing him all day. His face showed satisfaction as he had killed what could have been the greatest threat to the world. He stood above the fox and was stuck with overwhelming awe.

The fox lie still, looking out into the distance, still breathing and blinking. He eyes were filled with remorse but at the same time with gratitude. Never had Richter seen anyone survive his attack.

"How...?" He asked? "That's not possible." He raised his sword up and looked at it. "These flames were given to this blade by hell itself. Hell flames literally turn a body to ashes. Appearing like regular flames but it's said that it can even burn down to the soul itself. In our

fight you exhibited dark matter to appear as ashes that surround you, and somehow your body is in one piece, even after a direct critical hit.”

The fox flipped his ear slightly, listening but not looking at Richter. Richter bent down to his knees. “How in the world did you survive that? More importantly, what created a powerful demon like you?”

Again there was no answer. The mental link Zen established was broken. However, Richter could see in his eyes that he held some secrets but he knew they’d had to be taken to his grave. He grabbed the fox by the chest and lifted him up.

The weak fox screamed at the pain of the touch but no one heard him. He breathed heavily. He tilted his head upwards and gave Richter one last look into his eyes. Richter took out his flaming sword and set it ablaze.

“I’d say any last words, but it seems God already took your voice away.”

For just one moment, Zen could see something he’d never thought possible in a trained killer’s eyes, Regret.

Zen fell off the cliff, blood spilling from his burning heart as gravity brought him down to earth. Richter watched him fall and flew away after he heard Zen hit a branch 60 feet below the cliff.

Zen’s body could no longer feel anything and accepted the bruises, cuts, and scars without flinching. Zen’s eyes were hollow, the colors of the world faded from his sights. In addition to silence, he saw nothing more.

The sounds of calm moving water pierced the silence of Zen’s ears. He blinked slowly, moaning with a major headache and a numb body. He opened his eyes and the vision of nighttime in the forest surrounded him. Half his body was submerged in water following a small stream that lead into the distance. Like last time, his wounds were healed, his blue wings were out, and he felt as though nothing happened, but mentally, he was broken.

He didn't know I was part Phoenix huh? Zen thought, still lying down, still watching the stream with what little light the stars could provide him. At last he decided to take his body out of the water and crawled to a nearby tree. He faced his back against it and leaned, pulling his legs in close and moving his three tails around him from below. His wings covered the rest of his upper body concealing him.

He just sat there. Asking himself where he was wasn't a big concern. His body was fine but his eyes were dead.

Maybe I wasn't meant to leave that temple.

His body began to tremble and shake.

I woke up in a temple and fell out of the sky; I fought a demon and fell to earth, I caused a storm for 2 weeks and was experimented on, my first friend got fired because of me, got angry with me, and was attacked because of me. The friends I made back in the city could have been targets too because of me. A man and an organization hunted me down but I still live.

While his mind wondered on these facts, his body seemed to move on its own. He subconsciously got up and slowly walked into the forest, swaying back and forth and avoiding obstacles as if by instincts.

I guess its better I stay away from them, from everyone. I must be dangerous if I had to die again. They should be safe...if I stay alone.

His face gave very little effort at smiling at the thought, and two red tears traveled down the sides of his face, meeting at the bottom of his chin before falling to the ground.

Wonder what happens now? Whatever it is, it's not like it'll kill me.