

"LOST AND FOUND"

AFTERNOON - FOREST

The dappled sunlight of the summer sun dances across the forest floor as the fresh breeze gently rustles the leaves. Mushrooms, moss and tree roots cover the earth. Winding paths lead to nooks and crannies you would have never imagined were there. If you didn't know the forest like the back of your hand, you could easily be swept away and lost in its mysteries.

I nimbly make my way through the forest, hoping to catch even a glimpse of that enchanting creature again.

ANNETTE
(thinking)
Please be there...

I brush past the branches, hop over the stream, climb over the fallen tree and finally I find myself at the edge of the lake.

It's only been a few days since I was here... but somehow it feels different. Everything looks the same - the trees stand stoic and ancient, the crystal blue of the lake glints in the afternoon sun and the delicate flowers dance in the wind. But it's like the forest's very essence has shifted.

ANNETTE
No wonder people get lost here.

I say to my own reflection in the water. I go to glance up to the place across the lake, the place where I first saw it. That buck, almighty, a thing of true beauty. It was so powerful yet so enchanting, almost magical with those vines and flowers wrapping around it's antlers as if they sprouted from the creature itself.

My heart flutters with anticipation as I raise my head and my eyes meet the spot amongst the trees across the lake. But I see no buck, only forest.

I feel the sinking disappointment in my chest.

ANNETTE
I guess it wasn't meant to be...

A heavy sigh leaves my lungs and I look up to the sapphire sky. The warm sun-rays hit my face as a gentle

breeze kisses my cheek. I had been thinking about the buck every waking minute since I saw it. It had consumed my thoughts to the point where I could barely concentrate on work at the flower shop.

ANNETTE

(disappointed)

Huh, I guess I'm more desperate for adventure than I thought...

I stretch out my arms and take in the fresh summer air.

ANNETTE

Well I'm here now, it'd be a shame to waste such nice weather.

Scanning along the tree line of the lake, I spy a large oak tree close by. Its boughs cast luscious cool shade in the afternoon heat.

ANNETTE

Perfect!

Walking up to the mighty tree, I can hear its leaves rustling in the air. With a tired sigh, I slump down against the trunk and take out my water and crackers.

I sit for a while watching the lake and listening to the birdsong as I sip my water and eat my snack. I lean back against the tired old tree and let my mind wander to thoughts of the buck and all its mystery. I close my eyes and the roots of the tree cradle me off to sleep.

EVENING - FOREST

The crescent moon hangs high in the sky, spreading faint moonlight throughout the forest. The light twinkles across the lake and a cool breeze shifts through the evening air.

My eyes blink open, it takes me a moment to focus in the moonlight. I don't know how long I slept for... but it must have been quite a while. The chill breeze sends a shiver down my spine as I glance about the forest - I don't recognise anything in the dark. Nothing looks familiar, even the oak tree seems strange as it creeps and wanes.

I begin to feel the panic creep up. My thoughts start to swirl, my mouth goes dry and my stomach twists.

Then I hear a crack to my left, a branch breaking. I whip around to look and what I see steals my breath away.

From the shadows of the trees steps a creature, its eyes glowing a luminous green. Its stature is mighty and powerful, its fur thick and dense, with antlers tall and proud. My heart skips a beat.

ANNETTE
(breathless)
It's you...

The buck steps into the moonlight and now I can clearly see it. Where its fur meets its antlers vines sprout, entwining with tiny flowers, constantly weaving and mingling over the giant moss covered antlers.

ANNETTE
Wow... you're even more beautiful up close.

I gingerly get up and take a step towards it, but the buck shies away.

ANNETTE
(Calming)
No, no, it's fine. I'm not going to hurt you, I promise.
Look, here.

I gently pull the crackers from my bag and offer one.

ANNETTE
See? You can have it, it's for you.

The buck cautiously steps closer to me, its nostrils gently huffing as it sniffs the cracker. I stand calm and still as the huge creature approaches. The smell of fresh cut grass and soft lilac waft as it comes right up to me. Those sparkling green eyes don't leave mine for a second.

Slowly, I reach up my other hand, the buck doesn't flinch. I lightly touch the soft fur of the buck's face.

I feel a deep warmth as a light begins to glow from beneath my fingers. I watch in awe as the light starts to envelop the creature. Speechless I step back. Suddenly a wind begins to whip up about the buck swirling with leaves, flowers, bark. The light gets brighter, its intensity forces my back as I shield my eyes. I trip and fall hard against the earth.

The wind slowly fades and the light dims. I don't know what's happening, I'm so lost and confused, my head won't

stop spinning. I lower my hand and look towards where the creature once stood.

Those same green eyes stare right back at me but they are not the eyes of a buck, they are the eyes of a man.

A knowing smile creeps across the man's lips and he stands there tall and proud. A chill breeze whips up his deep brown hair which cascades around his shoulders and onto his elegant emerald shirt. He really is hauntingly beautiful.

LORRIS

(gentle)

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to startle you.

His voice rumbles so soft and low, it's as though it's the voice of the forest itself. He strides towards me with grace and purpose and extends a hand down.

LORRIS

Let me introduce myself.

I take his hand and with one swift motion he pulls me up with a gentle ease. We're standing so close I can smell the grass and lilac again, I can feel the warmth of his breath in the chill night air and I can't look away from those enchanting eyes.

LORRIS

I am Lorris, The Lord of the Land.