

Wolf Whispers

The wind softly whispers through the trees on a warm summer night. The forest slowly gives way to rolling meadows, back lit by a field of tinkling stars. Among the tall grasses of the open plains stands a large gathering of beast. These gently plant-eaters graze quietly unaware of the danger lurking in the darkened trees close by. Looking out from the lower branches of a tree hides a small figure. His large oval eyes peer into the distance looking for prey. Seeing his targets stretching out before him, He slowly moves out of his perch and touches the ground. Without a sound he moves back into the woods to the awaiting group. Looking around at the worried faces, he simply nods and they a soft sigh of relief. A pair of shadowed figures crossed the glen softly. One of the figures was that of a wolf, the other was of a slight build and finely boned, an elf. The sharp eyes of the wolf pierced the night, he whines with the arrival of new figures. They all shared the same features save their hair. Of the one that arrived, being their leader. His hair was the red of the leaves that fall just before the long cold times. Of the 3 waiting two had sandy brown and the other was blonde. The sandy one were a pair of twin, Oak, male and Dapple, female. The blonde was Halo, female. And the leader is Blaze, male. The new arrival wears an expression of apprehension.

“We have found the branches in the big meadow.” Dapple said in a soft voice.

“How many?” Blaze asked.

“More than I could count.” Oak replied. His sister nodded also.

“Good the whole tribe will eat well tonight. To the hunt!” Blaze called out to his wolf friend, Blackfoot.

As they begin the hunt, Blackfoot raises his head and howls. He is joined by the others joined in an eerier chorus. With a speed unmatched, they run like the winds across the tall grass. As the wind moved about them, it's impossible to tell where the wolves ended and the elves, save the patches of mismatched hair and skin. Soon the smell of the prey fills their noses. Pausing for a moment, they haunt the edges of the meadow like a malformed mist. Blaze slowly looks over the group of Grass-eaters, Yes he thought to himself, the pack and the tribe will eat well tonight. Looking towards his hunters, he calls out softly the form of attack.

“Oak, you and Dapple go around and split the herds. Halo you will split them again, and then will begin to fill our bellies.” Blaze whispered. “I will go straight for you when it's done. Right... to the hunt!”

With the speed and cunning of the elf and wolf pairs, they howl and drive the beasts ahead of them. Turning this way and that, they soon have half a dozen animals cut from the group. As the dust begins to rise, they draw their weapons and launch the final attack. With swift fingers, Oak and Dapple shoot arrows at a large male, striking a powerful blow deep into the creature's chest and side. Fighting for its life, the beast tries to stagger away from its attackers. Dapple seeing the wounded beast trying to make a run for it, move swiftly to finish the beast off. Halo and Blaze made a run at a large female.

Halo played decoy while Blaze took the beast from behind with a flying leap. With a flash of a knife it was over. Again a howl goes up as the rest of the herds flees in terror.

“Oak, go get the others. Everyone will sleep well with a full stomach.” Blaze said.
“Dapple, you and Halo start that one and I will start this one”

Giving the some of the tender parts to the wolf friends, they started to cut up the caresses of the branchers. Soon the rest of the tribe appeared. In misted the laughter and talk the work was soon finished. And the meat was packed on wolf and elf back and moved back to the camp.

Above all of this was an unseen watcher. He was different from the small band in the meadow below him. He was larger than the frail looking elves; he was heavy and had a barrel chest. His strong limbs were huge to the elves for he was human. His kind had always feared the creatures of the night. The eerier howls and sound that emanated from the forest as the sun had sunk and the darkness gathered. Slowly he slipped down the rise back to is village he walked pondering all he had seen tonight. Was it true what the elders said, were the small one some sort of evil and to be avoided or are they just animals as others thought.

He was deep into his own thought he did not notice the follower behind him. Hidden by the undergrowth, a smaller figurer followed the larger. Silently the elf watch the half-grown boy walk towards the large area with many huts. She wondered why they all lived like that, packed together with walls surrounding them. Stopping short of the main trail she watched him wander to one of the huts and go in. With a sigh she turned to ran swiftly for the sounds of home. Her name was Windwhisper, for she had a gift. She could listen to the wind and hear things and feel things. Windwhisper could tell you the weather or if someone was in trouble. She had not mastered her gift yet, and it was not always there for her.

Along her way, she stopped for a while at a small stream. Climbing a large tree Windwhisper pulled a small reed flute from her pouch. Haunting music filled the air. The melody might have been called eerie to some but to the young elf it brought comfort.

“Windwhisper?” Softly someone called.
“What do you want Riverstone. I want to be alone.”
“Your father sent me to look for you, when you didn’t return.”

Walking up to the tree he peered up through the branches in vein. She watch him circle the bottom of the tree looking for her hiding place. Windwhisper smiled fro she had made sure that nothing animal or otherwise could see her perch. As he rounded the far side she moved around behind him. With no more than a sigh of wind, she landed and tapped him. Screeching, he spun around and grabbed her.

“What do think you are doing? We are too near the tall ones camp. We had better leave before they come.” He said pulling her along.

“I am not going with you!” she roared as she ran off.

With no more effort than a young deer Windwhisper soon lost Riverstone in the thick forest undergrowth. Tears blurred the path in front of her, slowing her pace she found herself to be almost home. She rubbed her face with the back of her hand. Windwhisper crept to the edge of the clearing, where the tribe had gathered. Many voices drifted toward her and she was caught by what she heard.

“... they were on the ridge behind the hunt site. We know that there was only one of them. But they have never come so close in the past.” Oak was saying.

“What are going to do? First the river and now our hunt sites. Are we still safe here?” Fern called out, holding her children close.

“ I agree with Blaze we don’t know what they want and must wait and see what they do. But at the very least we should keep the young ones closer.” Starfire said.

“Why should we wait for them to attack us , we should leave now. Before they find our holt. “Feather demanded.

“No, we should attack first. Let them know that this is our home and we won’t be driven out again.” Runner cried.

“Enough! We are going to see what happens with them first!. So far it has only been one. I would like to know how he got so close without the wolves knowing. “Blaze said.

As Oak watched the tribe argue, he spotted his daughter. He made his way towards her. Moving so as to not attract attention, he soon came to her side. Looking at her remind him of her mother, who had died of sickness only a few short months ago. From her bark colored hair to her pale sky colored eyes. She had taken Mist’s death hard. He could see tear streaks on her face.

“Are you alright?” Oak softly said.

“I’ll be fine. What happened? Are we in any danger?” she whispered.

“Not that I know of, so don’t worry. Where have you been hiding all day? I sent Riverstone to find you, and here he comes now. ”Oak spoke as he looked around.” He looks as if you had a fight with him. Is there something wrong between you two?”

“I don’t want to talk about it.” Windwhisper said as she looked toward her life long friend.

Hanging his head, Riverstone wandered into the rapidly dispersing crowd of elves. Windwhisper wonder what had gotten into her at the tree hide away. She had never

gotten anger with no matter what he had done. Riverstone paused and glanced her way, their eyes locked. Suddenly as her head began to swim, she stumbled for a tree. Looking up she saw that his face was as pale as the white cold. Quickly he turned and ran for his den. As she watched him leave, her eyes met her father's. He had a strange look in his eyes. She couldn't shake the feeling.

Oak stood in wonder, no one so young had ever done what had just happened. Pairbonding. The last had happened four generation ago, just before the Great Move. What was to come, he did not know. One thing was for certain Blaze had to be told. But that was for later, now he had to get his daughter back to their den.

"We had better get you back." Oak said softly to Windwhisper.
"Why do I feel so odd father? What's happened to me?" she replied quietly.
"I will explain later. Let's go." He said moving her toward the safety of the den.

As dawn began to break on the horizon, Oak had finally told all he knew to his chief. Blaze sat for a while before speaking.

"What have you told her?" Blaze said watching the light gather.
"Nothing yet, I told her that she was just tired and to try to get some rest. I don't know how this will affect her. She is twenty turns younger than Riverstone. And I know that up until now he has thought of her as a sister."

"I know it will be hard on her at first but she must know what is going on and what it could mean for us." Blaze replied to his friend.
"What should I tell her? That her decisions may help or hurt the tribe." Oak demanded angrily.
"No, you should tell her what Pairbonding means to her and the tribe. We are too few to let this go unnoticed." Blaze said as he glanced at his friend. "If she is worried about how the others will take it, I don't see why we have to tell anyone yet. Let them settle for a while."
"Fine, I will do as you say. But I will not put my daughter in harms way. I lost Misty that way, I won't lose her too." Oak replied coolly.

Turning on heel, Oak left his leader to think as the sun rose. He wondered of what events lay ahead for his tribe. As he wandered to his furs, he thought back to his childhood. The last event that had happened just after he was born. Some things he'd remembered, others he had been told later when he was old enough understand what had happened. He remembered flashes of scenes and bits of conversation, others were just mere feelings.

It had been the end of the cold season; all of the white had melted long before that day. There had been trouble brewing between the chief and the best hunter. Wolfeyes had led his lead his band for most of the turns of his life. His father had died when he was just old enough to join the adults on hunts. It was on such when the trouble started. On Blaze's first hunt he had been faster than the best hunter, Swiftspear. Swiftspear had been the best hunter until then. Wolfeyes had praised his young son for the clean kill and had

told Swiftspear to watch him and help him learn more. Swiftspear had not wanted to play teacher. He was their hunter, but he did what was asked of him. It soon became apparent that Blaze's abilities were more than his. Envy began to grow in him, why he did not know. One turn later it turned to utter hatred. For Blaze announced that he and Starfire had Bonded. When Swiftspear heard this he flew into a rage. He and Starfire had been very close. Now this upstart had taken away the one thing he had loved.

On the night that they had told the tribe, all seemed fine. It had been a very good hunt that night and the pack had more than they needed. Around the glowing bonfire that night they had come forward and proclaimed it aloud to all the tribe. A loud cheer went up as the words were spoken. In the shadowed fringes a pair of cold eyes watched the couple move around talking to everyone. As they approached the area near him, Swiftspear moved slowly toward them. He could feel his rage and hate build to a point he could no longer contain. As they gazed into each others eyes, he approached them.

"You "came out as a cold growl from Swiftspear lips. "Who do you think you are? She is mine. "As all the tribe stop and watched he pulled out his knife and moved toward Blaze.

"What do you think you are doing? " Wolfeyes said as he stepped between the two rivals. "This not some thing you can control. They we meant to be and nothing will change that. "His eyes glowed softly in the moon light.

"I won't let it be. She was mine before he was old enough to understand." Swiftspear replied to his chief turning to look into his eyes. After a moment he lowered his eyes. "Very well, But this is not over."

The tension in the air eased as Swiftspear turned and melted back into the shadows and beyond. Wolfeyes turned back toward his son to see he unsure of himself and shuffling his feet, but it was the outrage in Starfire's eyes that worried him the most. He knew that she was a very proud and self reliant person and she would not to sit back and be taken as someone's property, more trouble was sure to come. It was only few day before that the trouble finally showed it self again.

Just as the sun was setting on a hot day, as the tribe awoke from their long day sleep. They moved slowly in the fading heat of the day. As more of the elves moved out of their dens, they stretched and took in the world around them. Swiftspear unlike the others had not slept that day. He slowly turned from his seat high in a tree to see the others moving readying themselves to hunt that night. Soft as a cat he moved down out of the tree and landed with a soft thump. He kneeled for a moment watching a shape move in the distance. She was all he had every wanted and he thought she felt the same for him. Softly as the wind he moved closer to his quarry and stop just out of arms reach, watching as the pair of figures moved slowly out from the cool and dark recess in to the fading light and heat of the day. Talking softly to each other they didn't see the figure stalking them. As they started to move around a corner Swiftspear made his move and stepped in front of the pair, gasping they stepped back a few paces.

“What you want ?” Starfire said recovering her composure. “I don’t want you, go away.”

“I still want you and I won’t take no for an answer. “ He growled.

As fast as his name he picked her up and took off at run that most could not match. Still stunned Blaze watched in terror as his love was being carried off. Raising the alarm he ran towards his love.

“Help me stop him!” Blaze cried as he ran.

As he ran the crowd around him grew. Wolfeyes was soon running at his son’s side, glancing down he could see his son torn between crazed worry and utter rage. In the lead Heron moved looking for signs of the trail. He paused for a moment looking at the soft dirt in front of him. Brushing his hand across the ground trying to feel any changes, he looks up sharply.

“This way... “He spoke before loping off again.

At a dead run Swiftspear can hear the whole tribe behind him, knowing that if he can reach the cliff cave he will be safe for a while. Kicking and screaming, Starfire struggled to loosen the iron grip on her waist. She knows that she must try and free herself before the tribe can reach them, knowing also that they will not treat him lightly for what he has done. Feeling the blood rage of her mate she tries a new approach.

“Let me down. You know they will be on you soon.” Starfire speaks softly. “This will get you no good.”

“You are mine and I won’t let you go to a half grown child.” he snarls back at her.

Getting her arms around his waist she slowly reaches for his knife, struggling she finally reaches it. Pulling it quickly, she rolls and places the blade to his neck. Swiftspear slows his run as he feels the cold sharp metal to his neck. Coming to a soft stop, he slowly lowers her to the ground. Careful to keep him at bay, she calls out to her tribe mates.

“Over here, I am over here. “ She yells out with out taking her eyes off him. “I am here.”

Crashing through the brush, the tribe pours into the clearing, surrounding the wayward soul in a large circle. Wolfeyes slowly paced around Swiftspear, avoiding his leaders gaze. Looking at the pair across from him, Wolfeyes knew that something had to be done.

“What am I to do now? Do my words have no effect on you? Why? Why do this at all?
“Wolfeyes said as he paced the problem. “ Do you think to challenge me? Or did you

think you would escape from us? “pausing Wolfeyes knew the answer by looking at him. “ Answer me!” he barked. Swiftspear jumped as he looked into the eyes of his chief.

“I have no desire to challenge or any answer for my actions. I did what I needed to, no matter what the cost.” he said holding his head high. He knew the price of his actions and now he wasn’t sure if he wanted to pay.

“You do realize what I must do?” he replied as he continued to pace around the proud elf. Looking at him, Wolfeyes could feel his rage build inside of him. “ Do you have anything to say ? “

“No I am prepared to face it” he said, watching his chief pace around him. Not a hint of fear escaped his lips or hands.

“So be it. As our rights demand, Blaze must chooses. Blaze, he can fight and return Swiftspear back to us. He may also banish him. Blaze, what is your choice?” he called out turning to look at his son. Barely waiting Blaze stepped forth into the circle and spoke so the whole tribe could hear.

“I wish to fight. “ Blaze said, knowing that the tribe needs every hunter to survive.

“So be it. “Wolfeyes replied, as move to take both of the elves knives and hunting weapons.

Moving to widen the circle, Wolfeyes felt his heart fill with pride that his son would be a good leader some day. As soon as the circle was wide enough the two figures moved slowly around in a circle pacing each other out. Blaze took slow soft steps as he moved around the ring. Swiftspear moved with all of the knowledge of a strong hunter. Around the circle the wolves began to gather, for this was truly a pack matter.

Knowing this was his only chance to come back, Swiftspear’s hands began to shake a little. He knew that banishment meant death for him. He was not sure why Blaze had given him this chance, but he knew that there was something else going on. This child was standing in his path to his life and survival. Blaze moved with soft foot falls as he and his rival paced out their nerves. Swiftspear suddenly leaped towards Blaze, twisting Blaze turned aside barely in time and rolled out of his reach. A snarl escaped from his lips as he turned to face Swiftspear.

“What has happened to you?” Blaze spoke as they paced the circle.” You were my friend, my mentor. Does a woman mean so much that you would give up your life?”

“And what of you...? Why are you trying to spare me? For I would have cut your throat without another thought, and you know it.” He replied as they paced in lazy circles.” Why waste your time with me? What do you want of me? “Saying as feigned a lunge.

“You know why I do this. The tribe needs every hunter we have when the cold comes.” Blaze said as he bounced back from the half lunge. “I have no other thought but the tribes survival. This should be yours also.”

As the two hunters paced each other, the tribe watches with growing tension in the air. Slowly the pacing come to a halt as they stand facing each other, locked into each others stare. With a sudden move, Swiftspear fell to his knees, baring his throat to his opponent. Tension rose higher as Wolfeyes moved to the fallen hunter, he placed a hand upon the young hunter’s shoulder made everyone took a long needed breath. Rising to his feet, Swiftspear walks slowly next to Wolfeyes, melting back into the forest. The tribe knowing it is now a private matter for the elders. Blaze watches as they move off to, giving his father the time to decide what to do with this broken person. Then he turned to Starfire, her eyes were ablaze. Awaiting the onslaught of her rage, he gave her a half smile.