

## A Conversation in the Woods

From the shadowed forest, I watch a lone figure next to a small campfire. He looks like he is waiting for something. I smile softly while watching him, wondering if he knows I am here. I may be good at what I do, but very few can sneak up on Wulfgarr.

I know it is Wulf who waits for his two companions. If Drakan had arrived first the camp would already be set for three. Drakan believes in efficiency. Wulf however feels that each should carry his own weight. If Kal had arrived first he wouldn't be alone. Kal seldomly spends time alone.

As Wulf stares quietly pondering into the fire, another figure approaches quietly from across the fire. Making only enough noise to announce his presence, Drakan steps into the firelight. He raises a hand in hello before joining Wulf at the fire. For a brief moment, there is a comfortable silence while Drakan settles into his place.

"He's late again." Drakan says amused, pulling a tobacco pipe out of a pouch at his side.

"Uh huh" Wulf shrugs offering matches to Drakan.

"5 coins say he either is not alone or smells of perfume when he gets here." Drakan says exhaling a cloud of smoke, as Wulf chuckles nodding at his companion.

From behind me, I hear a mockingly disgusted snort. I turn startled, to meet a pair of laughing eyes that always seem to be making

fun of something.

“So, should I tell them I was with you?” Kal asked, winking as he grasps me in a quick hug. “Hi Sarrin, How are you doin’, Hon?” Kal whispered laughingly.

“You’re a bastard Kal.” I whisper back. “I’m fine; the others don’t know I am here yet. So, doesn’t be an ass, O-okay?” I answered as I quickly step back from him trying to regain my composure, half of me hating the automatic effect he has on me. The other half answering to it against my will.

Kal glances at the fire and back at me questioningly. “They don’t huh? Right Sarrin, your secret is safe with me. Will you be joining us tonight or are you just spying?” He asks as he mysteriously disappears into the night.

Wulf and Drakan smile secretly at each other as the third figure appears noiselessly in the firelight.

“Sorry I’m late guys, I was ... um... busy.” Kal said nonchalantly as he settles in beside the fire. Wulf scans the woods around him half expectantly as Drakan coughs over a laugh he almost let out.

“Did she get home safe?” Wulf asks quietly, still scanning the forest, his face blank as Drakan laughs whole-heartedly. Kal smirks sarcastically, taking the good-natured jokes with a grain of salt.

“You know me better than that by now, Wulf. I left her out there in the dark by herself. I figured that way, When Drakan got bored and fed-up

with us he would have someone to rescue.” Kal says eyes smiling and wide with amusement. Wulf laughs before he can stop himself, flushed slightly before looking guiltily at Drakan.

Drakan tries to pretend to be angry, but the humor of the other two is infectious. And soon Drakan smiles and laughs with his companions.

“At least I rescue them, instead of collect them.” Drakan laughs as he glances sideways at Wulf. Kal’s eyes grow wide with surprise at the nature of the jest. It is not something Drakan would normally say.

“Yeah,” replies Wulf good-naturedly, “But most mine can fight their own battles and wont let me rescue them. So, what else am I supposed to do?”

The three of them laugh at that and the talk turns to battles won and lost and the women conquered or involved with each battle. I notice my name every now and then, usually followed by the same good-natured laughter. I begin to notice that I am missing a few whispered comments here and there. I slip closer to the fire feeling the heat it gives off, but still outside its light.

“There, she moved again, I think she’s getting rusty.” Kal whispers, and then picks up the thread of the conversation as if he hadn’t dropped it.

“Nah, it’s late and she is tired and probably cold.” Wulf replies under Kal’s louder words, attempting to keep the whispered conversation hidden.

“Oh for god’s sake!” Drakan sighs dramatically, “Have you two no chivalry? It’s been hours.” Drakan states dramatically as Wulf chuckles and Kal rolls his eyes.

“Sarrin, come to the fire already.” Drakan calls out to the darkness in my general direction.

“Hey I figured she’d come to us if she wanted our company.” Kal replied shrugging back to the fire.

“Sarrin is rather picky when it comes to these things Drakan.” Wulf replies, scanning the woods again, winking as his sharp eyes pass me. With a sigh, I stand and join the three men at the fire.

“Show-off’s ... all three of you.” I pout as I greet Drakan with the usual hug.

“You’ve been out there a long while girl. Perhaps it was you who was showing off.” Wulf comments cheerfully as he gestures for me to join them at the fire. As I step towards him, I feel the sting of Kal’s hand as the slapping sound accompanies my surprised squeak. I turn and glare, rubbing the spot with mock disapproval as I sit at the fire.

The talk picks up almost uninterrupted as we are all seated. For hours, we talk of the past and out present. Of loves lost and enjoyed, of some we hope to enjoy before we pass on. The last thing I remember is the warmth of the fire comfortably embracing me, as I drift away with the voices of my dearest friends. My heart and soul warmed by their company and friendship. I rest happy and unafraid near their fire.