

Migratory Birds
Chapter 1

ROAMER



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From north, you first cross the giant redwood forest that surrounds Amalkin. Through the tall slender trees just small green rays of light fall onto the earth that's thickly covered with fern that is also growing out of the fallen trunks. You can walk freely below the trees as the soil is almost free of large undergrowth, there're just some moss covered branches in your way.

It is said that a lot of different creatures live in the forest but you never see anything. Rarely one can see a bird that flies below the green limit of the lower branches of the giant redwoods. But you can hear them. There's a constant chirping and rustling in the air that seems to come from everywhere. People of Amalkin say that you can get lost in the forest and there's no chance ever returning to the civilized world as the forest itself has taken you back to the world of your ancestors. And some people say they really saw the forest breathing when it rained upon it and the trees surged with the wind. As you walk through the forest you can see a distant light from afar, between the trunks and as you approach on the muddy country road or right through the forest you can see the end of the forest and when you step out of it you're looking down on the outpost called Amalkin, its few roads and the wooden houses and just behind the hollow where the small town has been build in, the forest begins anew as it surrounds the village completely and over there one of the small crossing roads disappears in the green darkness of the redwoods again.

But don't underestimate Amalkin. Between Kastania City and the Silver Coast there's no crosspoint that would be more important. Well, Kastania City is neither the biggest nor most important city of the Midlands but there are quite a lot of travellers that wander between Kastania City's magic bazaar and the strange Silver Coast where the Tide Cruise Ferries are waiting to take the traveller offshore to one of the uncountable islands or right across Lake Moonfire. So there are a lot of travellers that stop in Amalkin on their way to one of the mentioned places. But there's also the road into the Blue Ridge Mountains where some people are living in total liberty of the so-called civilized world who are sometimes also finding a way to Amalkin where they sell some of the strange fetishes they created in their unity with the surrounding nature.

Amalkin is not unimportant, even though you may not find it on a map, but within the redwood and its many small settlements it is a well known place where you can get almost everything for a journey wherever you want to go. Since the people of Amalkin are creating the unusual magical navigation devices they call the Silver Arcs, the town has even become a known place to the technicians and city wizards that now sometimes come into town to get a Silver Arc for a special purpose.

Amalkin's shops are specialized in travellers as they can get there new supplies, food and the indispensable maps of the region. There is even a gas station and a mechanic who once got to this town and settled down here. He is the only one between Kastania City and Lake Moonfire's Silver Coast, so he is one of the most important people in town as he has got an absolute essential job to do. During the time he had been living there he did get along well with the

original inhabitants. Although they always had been prejudiced against all technical things they had quickly accepted the young stranger as he had been an enrichment for the whole town and he had not been the first one to remain in the village. Regular travellers who came through Amalkin began to like the friendly wolf who- despite his violent species- offered everyone a warm welcome who needed his help with a car or another travelling device. Thus it had not been very surprising that one day a wolf girl who had been travelling with a group of companions stayed with him and became his wife after a few months. One year later, they had gotten a cub, they called Gard, a boy with light gray almost silver fur who grew up with the other kids of the town as one of their kind.



Gard

The dark green light shone dimly through the high branches of the redwoods. Her finger ran over the cracks of the reddish brown bark. She rested her arm on one of the trees, blinked and took a deep breath as she looked down into the hollow of Amalkin. She observed the tiny inhabitants walking through the streets and she inspected the low wooden houses the town was made of. There didn't happen much in town during this time of the day- it was late morning- despite what she knew of Amalkin's reputation as an important outpost. She tried to catch the smell of the town. But there wasn't anything but the wet resinous perfume of the wood in the air, nothing else. She took off her backpack, sat down at the base of the tree, leaned against its trunk and studied the landscape while she rummaged through her backpack and finally took out a map she had found in there. She unfolded the map and studied it for a while.

Some birds could be heard but not be seen as they floated far above the branches of the redwoods. The only other sound in the air was the buzzing of the small insects that flew from one blade of grass to the next.

She could quickly feel the wet cold of the earth on her backside, but she did not stand up, but put the map aside, leaned back against the trunk again, folded her arms behind her head and observed what was happening in town.

The people came out of their houses, the traffic in the street increased as some cars and other motorized vehicles appeared as well as a few reptilian mounts and some chariots. In the town center the stores were easily recognizable as the people headed directly for them, coming out of one and going into another. Most people seemed to walk the way from their houses to the stores, just outsiders used their car to stop in front of a store and when they had done what they had to do, they mounted back into their cars, mainly jeeps and a few steam engines, or climbed onto whatever mount they owned and left the town by one of the three roads that crossed there, the car slowly disappearing in the green dark of the forest. Right opposite of her position there was also a very frequented gas station, where almost every car stopped before it was going to leave the civilization for the wilderness of the wood.

She could see a bunch of youngsters suddenly coming out of the gas station. She screwed up her eyes because of the brightness of the strengthening daylight. But she was just able to get an impression of the group as it walked slowly into the direction of the town center.

She stood up, quickly folded the map and threw it back into her backpack, shouldered it and began to walk down into town.

Loudly joking they walked into the store. Walld and Treon playfully punched each other, Gard walked behind them, Hunter and Fleagan were noisily discussing the last fight of the Kastania Warpack.

The dim light inside didn't stop them as they walked in, suspiciously observed by the young squirrel cashier who stood at the cash desk next to the entrance. They didn't seem to care much about him as they went noisily past him and wandered through the lines of the shelves with the food, grabbing something out

of it, throwing it back somewhere, still talking. They separated, everyone looking for what he wanted, except Hunter and Fleagan who got real loud, arguing about the advantages of the Warpack's fighting skills who had been defeated during the last three matches.

"What are you talking about? When Skarett and Farthe work together, nobody can stop them!"

"You just don't get it, Fleagan. Skarett and Farthe don't work together. They got the lousiest teamwork in the Midlands. No wonder they loose against every wimp."

"Hey, they got Rampage down, right?"

"But they still lost the fight! Got it, Fleagan?"

"Oh! Shut up! There's still nobody better than them. Or do you think the Moonfire Walkers could challenge them?"

"Forget the Walkers. Nobody's talking 'bout the Walkers here. Just take the Spitfire. They could take the Warpack down in two rounds."

"What? The Spitfire? The Spitfire are nothing but a bad joke since Armagg left them."

"They still've got the best technique in the Midlands. And even without Armagg, the Warpack couldn't win a single round against them."

"What the hell are you talking about? You just want to run them down, right?"

"Come on, Fleagan. They're losers, got it?"

"They are no damn losers like your bloody Spitfire."

"Hey! I just tell you the bloody truth and you just can't accept it"

"Truth!? What are ya calling truth, he?" And Fleagan pushed Hunter away, who stumbled over a stand with cans and fell down.

"You damn asshole." Hunter hissed, jumped up and rammed his puma paw into Fleagan's stomach.

The fox gasped. "You can have your asshole." And he punched his elbow right into Hunter's face who fall back, but quickly stood up again and charged the agile silver fox.

"You dickheads better stop that!" Somebody said with a tone that made Hunter and Fleagan stop.

Leaning on the back counter stood a young slender lynx in shorts and a vest, slowly chewing a stick of liquorice, his arms folded and observing every move the two boys down on the floor made.

Fleagan stood up. "What did you say?" And walked over to the lynx while tightening up his clothes.

"I said: You jerks oughta stop fightin'," said the lynx, chewing his liquorice. Without warning Fleagan rammed his fist right into the lynx' face. Gasping for breath, the lynx bend down, holding his face.

"You piece of dirt better don't offend me!" Fleagan hissed, looking down on his opponent.

The feline kneeled on the floor, holding his nose with his paw. When he took it away he stared at the blood in his hand. "No one touches me," the lynx hissed almost inaudibly and it changed into a growl as he jumped up.



The lynx

He didn't see the lynx' left arm coming up from below that hit him right onto his muzzle. As he slowly fell back his opponent's knee hit him in the crotch. He fell forward and instantly the lynx rammed his hand's edge against his chin so that the fox was hurled backwards again and slammed into a shelf. With a long deep moan Fleagan collapsed.

Hunter instantly kneeled down by Fleagan's side who lay moaning on the floor. Walld and Treon quickly came along, trying to help their mate.

Gard came out of the shelves' rows too and but he walked over to the lynx who covered his face with his hand and laid his arm over him. "Everything alright?"

The lynx violently repulsed the arm but Gard grabbed his shoulders and tried to get him up.

"Hey, Gard! You better watch out who your friends are!" Walld shouted, while he, Treon and Hunter tried to get Fleagan onto his feet.

"Damn! He was the one who has been attacked!" Gard shouted, trying to help the lynx who was still occupied with his nose.

Walld, Treon and Hunter carried Fleagan out of the store. "You'll pay for this! And Gard... better watch out next time you leave your house."

"JERKOFFS!" the lynx cried as loud as he could throughout the whole shop while the three just left the store, holding their powerless mate in their arms.

The squirrel cashier had come from the front and held out a handkerchief.

"Thanks!" Gard said, took it and gave it to the lynx who grabbed it violently and held it at his nose.

The door chimes rang as somebody walked in. The squirrel looked to the door, said: "Do you get along? I've got customers."

"I'll take care of him. Thanks!" said Gard. "Could we use your toilet?"

"Sure! Just ask if you need anything else." The squirrel said, eyed the strange two for a moment and then he already went to his cash desk. "I'm coming!" he cried as somebody called out for him.

"Come on! Better we get you to the toilet." Gard grabbed the lynx' shoulders and led the stooping feline behind the counter and through the back door into a narrow corridor and through another door into the windowless toilet.

Gard led the lynx to the white ceramic wash basin where the lynx supported himself with his left arm, pressing the handkerchief at his nose, not even looking into the mirror just in front of his face.

Gard opened the wooden door to one of the closets and grabbed some toilet paper and held it out to the lynx. The lynx dropped the bloody handkerchief, took the toilet paper and pressed it at his nose. With silent anger he hissed curses through his gritted teeth which Gard was unable to understand.

He fell silent. Just the regular but still heavy breath of the lynx who stood motionless at the basin was audible.

Gard leaned on the thin wooden wall and scrutinized the other one: He was slender, smaller than Gard, dark brown hair, light brown fur with the typical darker marking and lighter chestfur, he had a muscled back, a very slim belly, a firm, muscled backside, a short fluffy tail, well trained legs and the typical pointed ears

which twitched nervously. He wore a ragged vest which could once had been white that reached down to his navel, blue jeans shorts and- to Gard's surprise- instead of boots feline spats¹. His face was hidden behind the toilet paper he held under his nose.

The lynx slowly raised the toilet paper, snivelled and then lowered his head. "Alright?" asked Gard.

"Yeah, thanks!" the lynx answered with a hoarse voice. His articulation was somehow awkward and slurred. "Got anythin' more of that paper?"

"Sure!" Gard grabbed more of the toilet paper and held it out to him, who took it, opened the water tap, soaking the paper in the rushing stream and began to wash the blood from his furry muzzle.

"Damn motherfucker shouldn't've got me," he hissed. He leaned towards the mirror.

"Fleagan is an amateur ballfighter."

"Don't save him from bein' a brainless jerk."

Gard chuckled nervously. "That's for sure."

The lynx, having finished his business, turned around. He had a very muscled chest and belly, his was face was mainly straight and regular nothing but slightly tempered by his juvenile soft features. There was an almost invisible scar on his left cheek. The big brown slanting eyes were almost hidden by strands of his felted hair. His long pointed ears shivered faintly while he eyed Gard.

"Did you take my backpack with you?"

"What backpack?"

"Shit!" The lynx rushed out of the toilet. Gard followed close by.

"Oooph!" the lynx uttered in relief when he found the backpack still standing at the counter in the store. It was a huge backpack, completely filled up with whatever might be inside, a rolled up sleeping bag was tied up on the top and at its side dangled heavy walking boots. The lynx slowly took it up.

The squirrel cashier came from the front. "Everything alright now?" he asked. "Yeah, thanks!" the lynx answered as he shouldered his backpack. "Do you've got more of the liquorice? Lost my stick durin' the fight."

"Certainly!" The squirrel got behind the counter, took a big jar from the shelf and put it onto the counter. He opened it and took a handful of liquorice sticks out of it. "Here!"

"I don't wanna have that much!"

"Just take them. I'm sorry you've been attacked in here. So accept them as a compensation." He added as he saw how the lynx held his head to the side: "Nobody is eating liquorice anymore. So it's better you take them all."

"I don't want no presents!"

"It's no present. It's a compensation."

"OK! But I'll pay at least one blue stone!"

"Alright!" the cashier said, put the sticks onto the counter, took a paper bag out of the shelf and put the the sticks into it.

"Thanks!" the lynx said while he put the small gem on the counter and took the paper bag, grabbing a stick out of it and putting it right into his mouth. "Want one?" he asked Gard and held the bag out to him.

"No, thanks! I don't like liquorice," Gard answered.

"So, where do you go now?" Gard asked when they stepped out onto the street.

"Dunno. Camp somewhere... somethin' like that." The lynx looked into the bright sun that shone on the dusty road and the low wooden houses at its sides. He blinked. The green darkness of the redwoods looked down onto the town.

"You could come with me."

"No, thanks!" The lynx chewed slowly on the stick of liquorice in his mouth. They stepped onto the street and walked side by side up the road.

"I'm Gard," Gard said.

"Name's Jiddy," the lynx answered.

"Strange name for a guy like you," Gard mentioned.

"Yeah, a *guy* like me!" he said with such bitter sarcasm that there was no way to misunderstand what he had meant.

Gard raised his head in surprise and looked straight into her angular face while she responded with a self-confident smirk. Now the soft expression, the big eyes with their long eyelash, the regular muscled legs, her slender shape suddenly made sense and maybe the chest wasn't that muscled at all...

"I... I just thought..." Gard blushed.

"Never mind! I'm used to it," Jiddy said.

Gard remained silent, looking onto the the road as they walked on.

"Where do y'live?" Jiddy asked.

"My father owns the gas station." Gard waved his hand into the general direction, up the road. "We live in small cabin next to it... You really don't want to stay with us for the night?"

"Sorry. Ain't the gal for that."

"No! Don't get me wrong..." Gard said hastily, trying not to blush again. "I don't want... I mean: I have no interest in you! I just want to offer you a bed for the night."

Jiddy's features hardened as she looked into the dust that swirled up from her feet. "No! I already found a place in the forest. Thanks."

Gard stopped and looked at her. "You want to sleep in the forest?"

"Yeah! Why?" Jiddy stopped too and glared back at him, taking the liquorice out of her mouth.

"I don't advise you to do that! It's quite dangerous!"

Jiddy kicked her tiptoe onto the earth. "I can defend myself."

"Hey, people are the least you should worry about! There're worse things out there."

"I've been sleepin' in the forest on my way down here. 'Nother night out there doesn't matter."

Gard looked bewildered. "You mean: You came here on foot?"

"Yeah." Jiddy put the liquorice back into her mouth, observing Gard while slowly chewing on the stick, its bitter taste filling up her mouth. "All the way from Kastania City."

"You must be crazy!" Gard said seriously, turning his face away. "Why? Just 'cause I walk the country by myself?"

"No! But what could happen to a girl like you alone out in the forest?"

"Yeah, a *girl* like me..." Jiddy smiled scornfully.

"You know what I mean!" Gard looked up with an angry expression. For a moment they stared at each.

"Hey! You! Get off the road!" The huge bear driver of a big noisy steamtank yelled as his engine heavily climbed the road, slowly getting closer.

Gard and Jiddy simultaneously looked up, got aware that they stood right in the middle of the street and walked to the side, to let the huge rattling, screeching machine pass by.

"Seems like my father has got something to do tonight," Gard said thoughtfully as he watched the engine as it rumbled into the direction of the gas station. They looked after the engine who occupied almost the whole street and was nearly as high as the houses with the bear on the top of it.

"OK! I'll push off!" Jiddy said, turning back to Gard. "Still gotta do somethin'."

Gard looked back at her. "If you change your mind, you know where you can find me!"

Jiddy made some steps backwards. "OK...!" She paused and looked at him for a short moment before she lowered her head again. "I think I'll stay 'nother day. You can find me in the forest behind this standin' stone," she added then.

"The shaman monolith!?" Gard made a sign with his hand that he had understood.

Jiddy nodded, made two more steps back, turned around and walked between two houses into the direction of the stone monolith at the limit of the town. Gard observed her until she had disappeared behind a corner. Then he slowly turned around and headed for the gas station.

"Hey, Gard! You gotta help me here," his father said as he saw his son walking into the garage.

The whole building was occupied by the steamtank Gard had seen earlier. The iron engine with its massive chain drive and the enormous boiler on the top stood right in the middle of the wooden building, over the pit where his father could access the engine from below. The bear driver leaned at a barrel, a cup of hot coffee in his paw.

Gard walked over to his father, who jumped into the pit. "Give me the mechanics 12 and 13!" Gard searched for them on the workbench where all kind of rubbish was scattered. As he had found the big mechanics, he bend down and gave them to his father who began to unscrew the downside of the engine.

"So that's your son," the bear in his heavy leather clothes said.



"Yeah, a girl like me..."

“Yup!”

“Better watch out for him! If he’ll always stand right in the middle of the road, he won’t live much longer.”

The wolf removed a heavy plate. “He doesn’t normally do that.” “I’d bet! But he was quite occupied with some roamer², a lynx or some such feline.” The bear drunk some of his coffee.

“Who was that, Gard?” His father now scrutinized the inner machine of the tank.

“Nobody,” Gard answered, his hands in his trousers.

“But you seemed to be quite close to him. Roamers are usually no one a young guy like you should waste his time on,” the bear mentioned.

Gard didn’t answer, observing his father who began to tear some pipes out of the engine.

“That’s right!” the older wolf in the pit agreed and snivelled at one of the pipes. “It seems to be the oil pipes!”

“Dear Spirits, not again! I already had problems with it in Kastania!”

“Yup! A steamtank is quite robust. But when something brakes, it’s a hell of a job to fix it.” He tore more of the pipe out.

“I can tell ya, I can tell ya!” The bear walked over to the pit and observed how the wolf began to unscrew the pipes.

“Where’s mom?” Gard asked suddenly.

“She’s gone hunting. She’ll be back for dinner.”

Gard observed the two man who began to discuss the advantages of a steamtank. Then he walked out of the garage, past the gas pumps and up the small staircase into their house.

He stood in the small kitchen, looking at its simple furnishings: the small table with the red plate, the four wobbly chairs, the old iron hearth, the dirty sink, the small shelves, the crammed full side-board and the three years old calendar on the wall. He sighed and went over to the side-board to get something to eat.

The bells above the door ringed when she opened the door and stepped inside the shop.

It was a small shop almost completely filled up by showcases and shelves around the wall. The shopkeeper, a heavily built stag, stood behind a counter in the back of the shop and was busily discussing with a couple of foxes.

“No, no,” the shopkeeper said. “It’s not that difficult. The usage of such a talisman is no mystery. After you have correctly executed the ritual, you have to wear it during mating and afterwards of course. But I can guarantee you that you can be expecting soon. Just wear it!”

The woman had blushed slightly and she and her husband exchanged a quick glance.

Jiddy eyed the interior and made some steps inside. She looked into the showcases where all kinds of differently shaped pendants were exhibited. Small labels explained the effects of the jewellery. There were almost all different kinds

of favorable charms: Cure for different diseases, improvements for any characteristic, protection against illness or magic, simple lucky charms or even charms for fertility. Most of them were carved wooden pendants decorated with pieces of leather, cloth, feathers, leaves or bones. Some were made of stone and a few of them were bizarre metal wickerwork that was supposed to contain small pieces of Orichalkum³.

Jiddy looked up from the showcases and scrutinized the shelves until she seemed to have found what she had been looking for. She went over to this shelf. There lay small Silver Arcs, hanging on thin threads of silk, inside the arc hang a small silver replica of an animal. The whole arcs were covered by runes, small pictures and decorations most of them showing animals and plants. Jiddy looked through the shelf until she carefully took up a much simpler Arc, hanging on a simple leather strap. The silver was of poor quality, it had darkened due to its age and the small fish which hang inside the arc was just recognizable from its shape. The arc itself consisted of the misshapen replica of two strange birds of prey and some wickerwork.

“Hey, you!”

Jiddy looked around.

The shopkeeper was glaring at her, ignoring his confused vulpine customers. “Put this down! Now!” he shouted.

Carefully Jiddy put the arc back into the shelf, suspiciously observed by the shopkeeper who just turned around of his customers when Jiddy had made some steps away from the shelf.

When the shopkeeper had turned away Jiddy glanced at him, her eyes filled with hatred.

The foxes suddenly seemed to be in a hurry, paid for the talisman and left the shop, giving Jiddy a compassionate look when they passed by.

Jiddy still looked into the showcases, observed by the shopkeeper. The she turned around to him. “How much’s that Silver Arc?”

The shopkeeper laughed shortly, leaning on the counter. “More than someone like you could ever be able to afford.”

“I need it,” Jiddy replied.

“Bad luck!” the shopkeeper said, took up the cloth where he had displayed the talisman to his customers and turned around.

Jiddy gritted her teeth and swallowed the knot that had formed in her throat. “You aware that I’m a girl?” she asked.

The stag turned his head around, his eyes mere slits in his face. “What do you want to express?”

“Maybe we can have a deal,” Jiddy answered.

The stag fully turned around, slowly eyeing her inch by inch. “OK!” he said after a while.



"Jiddy looked through the shelf until..."

It was nothing but some kind of brown flashlight in the corner of his eyes but it was everything his lupine senses needed to get attentive and thus he raised his head and looked down the dusty road.

There he was, a slender feline figure, his hair fluttered in the wind, the small tail wagged with every step and the pointed ears were laid back as he ran as fast as he could. And it was fast. His feet hammered against the ground, pushed him so quickly forward that he dragged behind a small cloud of dust. He ran down the sloping road, evading different people which looked after him with screwed up eyes while he did not pay any attention to them, instead dodged a car which drove up the hill, swirled around a couple and then he already reached the lowest point of the clearing, he was nothing but a small figure between others but he ran so fast that he still got everybody's attention.

The wolf sniffed and although it was very faint he could still smell the strange feline scent. Without taking off his eyes from the person, vanishing in the distance, he tipped onto the shoulder of the one who sat next to him. "Look!" he said simply and pointed out the fleeing one.

The puma next to him leaned forward. "Holy shit!" Hunter exclaimed. "It's this damn bastard roamer."

Walld just nodded. "Wouldn't have expected him to dare to show up again," he stated lowly.

Coming out of the shop where the bench stood next to Treon joined in on them. "What are you staring at?" he asked, trying to make something out in the direction where the two others had turned to.

"See that running one next to Sherfon's house?" Walld asked.

"Yes," Treon answered after a moment he had needed to find what the other wolf had meant.

"It's this fucking roamer," Walld said.

"Really?" Treon screwed up his bad vulpine eyes, trying to recognize the figure which just turned around a house and disappeared from their sight.

"Yup!" Hunter answered. He was still leaning forward, supported himself on his knees with folded paws.

"And I already picked up his trail," Walld added. "This time he won't get away."

"Damn right!" Hunter mumbled.

"Sure!" Treon whispered while they all stared at the distant house where the lynx had disappeared and they got silent for a moment.

Now that Walld had mentioned it, Treon was able to smell it too: It was a very faint feline scent, almost completely drowned out by the present scent of the puma next to them. but nevertheless it was there. It was a faint scent which resembled a strange mixture of dry leaves and freshly broken grass and another component the wolf was unable to classify although he was certain that he knew it. "He's heading for the shaman monolith," he summarized the obvious facts.

"Yeah! And that's where we'll get him." Walld stood up and Hunter too.

They did not need any agreement to walk down the street. The three boys, two wolves and a puma, went past the houses of their hometown and no one of the

people on the street did pay any particular attention to them because they were quite well known as what they were. The sand and dust faintly crunched beneath their feet and the small stones they pushed aside rattled while everyone gave way for them.

There were no clouds in the sky, there was nothing but a profound blue from horizon to horizon which was formed the surrounding forest. Now wind was blowing and beside the noises of the town every other sound of life had died down because of the heat as all the animals had escaped into the deeper parts of the woods where the last remains of coolness had retired to.

"Hey! You! Get out of the way!" somebody cried and now the boys noticed the large steam tank which drove down the road for the very first time although they could surely have heard it before as it rattled, puffed, roared and whistled with such a deafening volume that they were rather surprised to see it just there behind them. Quickly the boys went aside and let the huge machine pass by, a huge bear sitting at the very top in the driver's seat. They stared after it while the hammering noise slowly vanished and disappeared as the steam tank descended the road furthermore and then headed directly for the town's edge as fast as it could.

"He's coming from the gas station," Treon stated rather disconnectedly. The boys went on. Now they did not stop anymore but headed directly for the shaman monolith, walked straight through the gardens of several houses, not caring for the disapproving glares of their owners and they did neither pay attention to the large boulder which formed some kind of spiritual center of the town. The two wolves sometimes sniffed to get an impression of the trail again but they were so focussed on this scent that they did not really need to reassure themselves anymore. The puma followed them close by. Now that they left the confusing mixture of scents of the settlement and its inhabitants the trail got much more intense.

They broke through the light undergrowth of the forest and penetrated into the greenish light beneath the large slender trees. They did not pay any attention to their surroundings, hardly noticed the obstacles in their way which consisted of small trees, bushes and overgrown fallen trunks while they went on. Cool refreshing air flowed around them, dried off their sweat, carried along the different smells of the wood but they did not let themselves be distracted by anything.

Suddenly Walld which had been in lead stopped. He rose his head and sniffed strongly. "He's got to be close by," he whispered to his companions. "The smell is very intense now."

Even Hunter did smell it too and he had to agree that it was much stronger than anything else now even though the intense presence of the forest. "Where's he?" He whispered.

Treon quickly put a finger against his lips and thus indicated the puma to stay silent. Walld signalled them to go on but now they got went on as silent as they could. But nevertheless the bushes rustled when they past by and small branches cracked beneath their feet.

“Lookin’ for me?”

They rose their heads and instantly recognized the lynx who was sitting on a low branch of a redwood nearby. He leaned against the trunk and looked down onto them with these strange slanting eyes of his. The branch he was sitting on was growing at least at three times his own height.

The boys glared up from below without knowing what to reply. Walld bared his teeth and snarled. “Damn right, smartass. Now we’ll give you what for!”

The lynx hit his hand against the branch he was sitting on, pushed himself upwards and then hit against the trunk and thus hurled himself off and hit the ground beneath before the boys had even been able to notice. “But this time you don’t get me unprepared!” the lynx hissed and then bared his sharp feline teeth and snarled at them from the deepest bottom of his chest.

Without much enthusiasm he picked at his meal. He supported himself on the table and stared at his fork how it arranged and rearranged the meat and the vegetables.

“What’s up, Gard?” His father had laid down his fork and looked at his son.

Gard rose his head and blinked at his father without any understanding.

“Come on, Gard, we know there’s something wrong with you,” his mother said, observing his reaction from the corner of her eyes.

The boy pulled a face, hesitated. “I got an argument with the others,” he mumbled.

His father rose his eyebrows. “That’s something new?” he asked ironically, instantly receiving a disapproving glare from his wife.

“Don’t worry, Gard. You know they don’t bear grudges,” the lupine woman tried to encourage her son.

“Except that they *were* wrong this time. Fleagan beat up a lynx without any reason and got his share from it.”

“This roamer?” His father asked. The woman looked inquiringly at him but he just waved his hand.

“Yes!” Gard said shortly.

They fell silent and slowly the adults went on eating until they were interrupted by the noise of steps on the stair to their door.

“Speaking of the devil,” the woman said.

In the door frame appeared the brown and gray fur of Treon. The boy had a severe cut at his forehead and blood had flowed down onto his entire face but seemed to have dried by now. The boy held his right arm with his left and was just able to knock clumsily against the door.

Gard stood up. “I’ll be back in a minute.” And then he was already out of the door which shut behind him.

Rather unwillingly his parents observed like the two youngsters walked down the stairs and started talking at its edge. Instantly Treon started to talk insistently to their son. His blood covered face was distorted by disgust and hardly restraint anger as he seemed to explain something, seemed to besiege Gard who just

replied shortly. But Treon did not give up and talked on. Then Gard said a little bit more and in this moment the other wolf stared at him in absolute bewilderment and then cried at him as loud as he could. Despite the shut door the two wolves inside were able to hear the echo of his voice, even though they did not understand what he shouted. Treon went on yelling then spun around, holding his wounded arm and then walked away without caring for Gard anymore. The boy looked after him for a while then walked up the stairs and came back inside and wordlessly sat down on the table again.

"What's wrong, Gard?" his mother asked.

"Nothing!" he replied, staring at his plate.

"Don't try to fool us," his father added.

Gard pulled a face. "They want me to lure the lynx into an ambush."

"What?" The woman looked at her son with disbelief.

"Yeah. They attacked him, to pay back for what he had done to Fleagan and something went wrong and as I am the only one who he seems to be involved with, they wanted me to..." Gard fell silent.

"Stay out of this!" his father said.

"Sure, I won't do that," Gard reassured him.

"No, you misunderstand me. Stay away from them and this roamer as well."

"Hey, what's wrong with the lynx?" He looked inquiringly at his father. "He just defended himself after all."

"Roamers are nobody you should get mixed up with."

"What's wrong with roamers?" the young wolf asked. "You used to be roamers too."

"That's something different," his mother intervened.

"It's not!" Gard contradicted.

"It is!" His father glared at him. "When I had your age you could travel from Dyaamar to the west coast and the biggest menace you would have encountered would have been a thunderstorm. Now you can't even get from here to Kastania without arming. So remember that! I don't want to know who that guy is and I don't want you to get mixed up with him. Look at what he did to your friends..."

"They're not my friends!" Gard suddenly interrupted his father.

The older man was startled for a moment. "Whatever! You stay away from this roamer and that's it!"

Gard glared at his father for a moment and then lowered his head and picked at his cold food.

"Hey!" Gard looked into the forest. "Hello!"

He began walking into the dim light, climbing over some fallen trunks. The forest was almost completely silent. Some birds were singing and behind his back the muffled sound of the town was audible. His paws rested upon the dry fallen leaves while he observed the uneven surface where fallen branches and whole trunks, fern and small bushes obstructed the view. Above the surface's vegetation there was nothing but the huge trunks

whose branches grew far above the ground so that Gard's shouts were echoing below this green ceiling.

There was no response.

"Hey!" he shouted again. "Jiddy! It's me, Gard"

He listened. Nothing but the sound of birds chirping somewhere in the distance.

He began to walk further into the forest, climbing over the fallen trunks and branches, searching a way in between the small bushes that hid almost everything. He could feel the damp cold of the soil below his feet as he walked over the fallen leaves. He was unable to distinguish anything that might be hiding in between the bushes and the huge fern but he went on.

"He-Hey!" he cried again. "Jiddy!"

"I'm not deaf, y'know!" someone said close by.

He turned around and saw Jiddy lying at the base of a huge redwood almost right next to him.

She had to have rested as she slowly sat up straight, pushing her messy hair out of her face. "Hi!" she said tonelessly. Next to her leaned her backpack.

"Hi!" Gard replied, still a little bit confused that he had just overlooked her. "Sorry, I didn't mean to disturb you but I didn't see you!"

An ironic smile flitted over her face. "If I don't wanna be seen, I won't be seen," she replied. "Sit down," she invited him and grabbed the backpack to throw it away so that Gard could lean against the trunk too.

First Gard hesitated but then sat down next to her.

"I still can't believe that you've been sleeping out here!" Gard said while getting down.

"Got any problems with that?" she replied ironically.

"No...! But why should someone sleep out here if he's got the possibility to sleep in nice warm bed?"

"You've never done anythin' like this, right?" she asked.

"Well,... no!"

"That's why you won't understand it. Sleepin' out here's somethin' completely different. You don't have to care 'bout other people, you're alone 'n y'know it. There's no one to bother you, no trouble." She inhaled.

Gard remained silent, thinking about what she had said. "I still don't get it!" he said after some time.

"Try it! It's easiest to get it," she said and looked at him. He smiled shortly, turned his head up and looked to the small pieces of sky between the foliage of the trees, crossing his arms behind his head. She sat silently next to him, carefully eyeing him, his light gray fur, the severe features of his face, the long tousled hair, the muscles of his chest stretching underneath his black T-shirt.

"How do you get along alone in the forest?" he asked suddenly.

"I got everythin' I need!" she answered, moving her head in the general direction of her backpack.

He nodded thoughtfully. "What do you need?"



"I'm not deaf, y'know!" someone said close by.

"Depends," she said, shaking her head. "Some basic equipment 'n... whatever you don't wanna miss."

"Could I have a look?" he asked.

"kay!" she said and pulled the backpack closer and handed it over to him. He eyed the backpack, the water bottle and the boots hanging at the side, the sleeping bag tied up on the top and the short hunting knife in a sheath on the side as well. "May I open it?"

She shrugged her shoulders and nodded at the same time. She observed him as he carefully undid the straps and opened it.

"Wow!" He carefully took a Silver Arc with a small silver fish out he found on the top of the stuff inside. "A Silver Arc!? Where did you get this one?"

"Bought it!" Jiddy replied.

"But they're awfully expensive!" he noticed, looking at the girl.

Jiddy slowly pushed the hair from her brow. Suddenly she appeared extremely tired. "I paid for it!" she said simply.

"And what do you need it for?" he asked curiously.

"For my journey!" she answered.

"But it's no compass or something like that. It's rather a spiritual guide," he said while he studied the rough silver artwork.

"I know," she replied.

Gard did not understand what she said but he did not want to force her to tell him and so he carefully laid the Silver Arc aside and started rummaging again. He found a small metal bowl, a metal cup and an equally small metal pot, a compass, a rope, a hunting knife, a map, a thick candle, a huge matchbox, but also a flint and an old lighter, some bacon in greaseproof paper, some small cans with vegetables, a paper bag with three hard rolls, some T-shirts, socks, pants, sweaters, leather straps, several differently shaped pieces of cloth, a spool of thread and lots of smaller stuff which lay around at the bottom of the backpack.

"Be careful with that one," Jiddy said while he laid the map aside. "It's been expensive."

He hesitated and took another look at the map because he had not realized that there was something special about it. And it really seemed to be an absolutely ordinary map. "What's so special about it?" he asked.

"It's the best one can get," she answered.

He looked at it again and this time he really noticed that its scale was really remarkable. It displayed much more territory than he had ever seen on a map, from the western coast to the far east there seemed to be everything: The islands of the Western Coast, Sea's Grave, Lezardos, Focal Point and Fereau in the west; Kvafyof, Northpoint and the Frozen Sea in the north; Dyamaar, the Pillars of Xos, the Hundred Kingdoms, Yyid al'maudi and the Salusian Woods in the east; Ao, the Rose Desert and the Mechanic Rivers in the south. Almost any place he had ever heard of was marked upon the thick, greasy paper. "Wow!" He studied it more closely, visibly fascinated by it.



The Silver Arc



A demonfly

She still lay on the ground and observed him from below. Her head rested on her arms while she studied every inch of the wolf boy. Her slanting eyes blinked rarely.

“So you’re a roamer,” he said suddenly, looking up from the map.

Quickly she turned her head away. “Sort of,” she replied shortly.

“Where do you come from?” he asked. His yellow eyes shimmered with curiosity.

“A small town, east of here,” she answered. Shadows of the foliage above her covered her face, quivering slightly.

“Which one?” he asked.

“My problem!”

He was somewhat startled for a moment but he did not want to go on further and thus looked on the map again. After some time he said almost for himself: “I really wished I could see all these places one day.”

“You just gotta go there.”

Weakly he shook his head. “It’s not that easy.”

“It is!” she insisted. “Look at me! Even a *girl’s* able to do that.” The word almost sounded like she felt disgusted at it.

He did not want to argue and thus kept silent, carefully he folded the map and put it back into the backpack of hers. Then he looked into the forest just like she did. But besides the same green everywhere he was unable to percept anything of any interest. “Why did you invite me to come?” he asked.

“Why did you invite me to come over to your house?” she returned the question.

He shrugged his shoulders. “Don’t know! For no particular reason.”

Jiddy hmphed.

“What?”

“Nothin’!” Lazily she waved her paw and he noticed the white shimmer of claws at the top of her fingertips as it was reflected by the sunlight. They fell silent and Gard rose his head, looking up into the trees. There were some birds flying around and he was convinced that he shortly saw a small lizard, at least he perceived a small greenish figure running straight up a tree. A demonfly^A droned noisily around his head and he violently lashed around himself to chase it away what caused her to smile but he did not see that. The boy sighed and leaned against the trunk again.

“I met Treon,” he said after a while.

“Who?” She was chewing on a blade of grass.

“The wolf with the brown fur,” he said and looked at her from the corner of his eyes.

“Oh, yeah!”

He waited for further explanation but she did not say anything. “You really did him in. Him and Walld and Hunter.”

She shrugged her shoulders. Her ears twitched slightly. “They attacked me.”

He tried to take his look off her but for some unexplainable reason he was fascinated by her indifference towards his friends. Due to the brightness of the

sunlight which shone through the branches for a moment he had to blink. "They wanted me to help them to ambush you."

She was silent for a moment. "Thanks!"

"What for?" He screwed up his eyes.

"For not havin' done it," she replied and offered him a strange feline smile. Her slanting eyes were almost completely closed and she rather lay down than leaned against the tree. She had taken the blade of grass out of her mouth and waved it around in front of her face.

"How do you know?"

"You're nice." Once again the smile strengthened. "I like you," she stated and put the blade of grass back into her mouth. With her arms folded behind her head and screwed up eyes she observed even the faintest movement of the boy who stared at her with an expression of confusion.

He blinked several times and turned his face away. "You shouldn't stay here," he said.

"They won't let you get away just like that."

The girl sighed. "They wouldn't even dare to."

He could feel her glare resting upon him.

"What 'bout you?" she asked.

He rose his head and looked up once more, then with a sudden movement he rose to his feet. "I got to go. I should not even speak to you."

"What...?" She sat up.

With steady steps he walked away.

"Hey, wait!" Jiddy shouted, but Gard didn't react, walking away from her without looking back. Jiddy looked after him until his figure had completely disappeared in between the bushes and trees.

"Shit! Shit! Shit!" Jiddy hit her fist on her knee. Then she wrapped her arms around it, her head rested on her arms and she motionlessly stared into the increasing darkness of the forest.

He did see almost nothing but the dim light of the golden moon which shone inside as it illuminated the outlines of the room's interior so far that he was able to recognize all what he knew so well. He turned around onto his stomach and snuggled his head up into the pillow. The soft cloth pressed into his muzzle so that he was almost unable to breathe but he didn't care, he just stared into the darkness. The sleep did not come although his lids were heavy and his eyes hurt from dryness whenever he blinked.

He puffed impatiently and turned onto his back again, the thin quilt rustled and he stared at the wooden ceiling again. All the patterns of the wood were known to him, he could have seen them with his eyes closed but now it was the only thing he was able to watch at so he tried once again to find the laths which belonged together. When he had been younger he had imagined that some of the darker spots might have been faces or figures, he had even seen cars in some of them. But somewhen he had given up on that and now he was unable to

remember where they had been even though he knew that they had been there once.

His breath was slow and regular, his eyes wide opened, one hand rested behind his head, the other one lay on his belly, his legs were slightly parted and the quilt regularly rose and lowered according to his breath. What was haunting him? He tried not to think about anything that had happened during daytime. He turned on his side and stared at the wallpaper with the small faded flowers. The colors had disappeared with the time, now it seemed like it had once been white and the grayish color and the strange reddish spots were nothing but stains and discolorations. He turned on his other side and tried to lay his head on the pillow as comfortably as possible. He hit it on the pillow several times until it had the appropriate shape and his head sank into it like into a cloud. He could feel his breath waving around in between the cloth, getting back to his muzzle. He could have smelt himself but there was nothing to be smelt. He raised his head and laid his arm underneath it while he held the quilt in his other. He still stared into the darkness of his own room, recognized his cupboard and the desk his parents had once offered him although he still didn't know what it could be good for so that it was cramped full with old books, some tools hid under them, broken equipment he had wanted to repair but never had and some stuff from school he never had thrown away.

He sighed and pressed his head even deeper into his pillow.

Heya, the golden moon was full tonight. It shone brightly, its pleasant light seeped into his room, flowed along the floor and faded away in its desert darkness.

It clicked. He pricked up his ears.

It clicked again. A short, weak, dry sound. Click, again! It came from his window.

He rose in his bed and stared at the window over his desk.

It clicked again, the quick sound of a small stone hitting glass.

He pushed the quilt aside and jumped out of the bed. The night's coolness waved around his almost naked body while he went to the window and opened it. He looked down into the night, the cold of the outside rushed around him and in the shadow of the opposite house he was able to make out a slender figure which leaned at its wall.

"Hey!" he half whispered, half cried.

The figure pushed off the wall and came out of the shadow. It was the lynx who looked up to him. "Seems like you didn't sleep!?" It was rather a statement than a question.

"What do you want?" he whispered.

"Y'said that y'never spend a night in the wood," the lynx whispered.

The cold of the night made him shiver as the wind blew into the room. He could hear the rustle of the distant trees. "What's about it?" he asked back.

The lynx shortly lowered her head. "This'd be the perfect shot for you," she replied while looking up again.

He hesitated. It was much too dark to see what the lynx was actually doing. Gard just saw her outlines in the dim golden moonlight.

"I'll leave tomorrow," the girl added from below.

He still didn't answer. Without moving he looked down at the slender feline figure which stood in the grass around their house, her dark brown hair seemed to cover most of her face but that was rather an illusion as he looked down from above. Her pointed ears flicked and her short fluffy tail wagged agilely. His face twitched. "OK, I'll come down!" he whispered.

It seemed like she smiled but he was unable to see that properly.

He closed the window and blindly looked around in the darkness of his room until his eyes had adapted to the darkness again. Then he took his clothes from the basket at the end of his bed and quickly slipped into his T-shirt, put the denim on and hesitated while he held the sweater in his hand. But then he just threw it onto his bed turned around to his cupboard and pulled out a sleeping bag he rarely had used.

He sneaked over to the door and opened it as silently as possible. He listened carefully: There was no sound in the house, especially his parents' room was absolutely silent. He stepped into the corridor, carefully closed the door to his room and went over to the staircase. As quietly as possible he went down, trying to evade the creaking stairs. When he reached the first floor he headed for the kitchen, unlocked the front door and stepped outside in the dark cold of the night.

"What took you so long?" she asked him while he went down the stairs.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Got to dress," he said.

She smiled in a way he didn't quite understand, it was somehow amused and pitiful at the same time.

"Let's go then!" she said and they went down the dark street. He carried his sleeping bag in one arm while they went along in the darkness. He was unable to see very far but she seemed to be quite confident of herself, her lynx eyes guided her through the darkness.

The houses were almost inseparable although the golden moon shone brightly, the all surrounding wood seemed to absorb all of its light. The black moon had risen above the horizon too, it's strange silvery outline was clearly visible far above the forest's shadow. Tezu, the red moon, was just in his new moon so that he was nowhere to be seen on the night sky, even Koda's outline was brighter than Tezu who hid completely in the darkness. There were just few stars, some bright spots which had made their way through to Amalkin. But there were no clouds even no high floating ones, it was much too cold for clouds. Their breath condensed to shimmering mist in front of their mouths. He was feeling cold contrary to the lynx girl who seemed to get along just fine. After all she was still wearing her usual clothes, the vest and the shorts.

"Aren't you cold?" he asked.

She raised her head. "Uh?"

"Aren't you cold?" he repeated.

She shook her head. "I've got much thicker fur than most people," she replied. He nodded slowly while he tried to observe her face but it was much too dark for him to distinguish anything although it seemed like she was really not feeling the cold at all, strangely she even seemed to radiate heat at least he thought that sometimes he saw moist mist evaporating from her body but that could also be an trick of the moonlight.

They had walked past most of the houses when she finally turned off and walked right through the garden of a house. He followed close by although he would never had done anything like that during daytime. But he somehow felt that it was different with her and that it really didn't matter that late at night. Anyway the whole town was completely dead, no lights in the houses, no one on the street, not even the weakest sound was there to be heard except for the faint rustling of his boots and her bare feet on the ground.

They went past the shaman monument, an ancient relic no one knew the purpose of, an erected strangely smoothly carved stone with holes and hollows larger than three standing men. It had already stood there when the town had been founded and although sorcerers had already puzzled about it no one had ever found out what it could have been good for. It just seemed to be a strangely carved stone in the middle of nowhere, neither more nor less. Just like anyone else the girl didn't care about it and passed it without even looking up while the young wolf couldn't resist noticing that now it looked even more scary than it already did during daytime.

Without hesitating they penetrated the forest and he noticed that he now was absolutely blind in the darkness. He was just able to make out Jiddy's outlines so that he just followed her, although he stumbled over branches, bushes and whatever came into his way. He tried to walk as close to the lynx girl as possible and carefully held his sleeping bag to his body as he could also feel the trees' damp moisture which seemed to cool down everything even more and he could feel the cold creeping underneath his clothes, into his fur until it reached his skin, made it shiver.

"Here we are!" the girl said and stood still.

He almost ran into her as he had not been able to notice that they had reached whatever. He blinked and looked around, tried to make out anything. Slowly, extremely, painfully slowly he could distinguish the grayish outlines of a trunk, Jiddy's stuff which lay on the ground and her sleeping bag which lay just under the tree.

"Gimme that!" she said and without waiting for an answer she grabbed his sleeping bag and threw it onto her own.

He was once again startled.

She turned around on the spot and her hand casually pushed a strand of hair out of her face and thus revealed her eyes which rested upon him, glittering in the dark. She eyed him inch by inch and he could almost physically feel the weight of her view which slowly went up and down his body.

"What?" he was just able to ask.

Then she had already stepped closer, had grabbed his head and pressed his muzzle down onto her own. Their mouths and lips met. While she opened her mouth his lips were also dragged behind and in this same instant her warmth jumped across, his lips smoothed, gave in to the caress of hers, he could feel the taste of her saliva as her tongue reached out into him, it danced around in him, explored him, made him shiver, the taste dizzied his mind. It seemed to him like their lips melted together.

Suddenly she let his mouth go and her lips wandered down his muzzle.

“What are you doing?” he stammered.

She kissed and licked his chin, her tongue ran over the short fur on the hard bone just underneath the skin as she explored its regular shape. “What d’you think somebody’d do in the forest in the middle of the night?” she replied.

He panted although he tried not to show it. “I... I am not that kind of boy...” he stammered.

She licked his neck, her slick feline tongue ran over the strains, it tickled but also seemed to take his breath away. “Don’t care,” she mumbled. “Just lie back, close your eyes ’n let it happen,” she advised him while she gently kissed his neck with quick careful movements.

He could feel the soft shape of her lips, spreading more and more warmth which extended from the spots she caressed throughout his whole body.

He gasped.

She rubbed his hard member which still hid underneath his pants. She grabbed it with one hand, massaged it through the cloth. He inhaled sharply. It grew beneath her touch, the arousal spread through him like the echo of a powerful sound, shook his innermost, his mind vibrated as it responded to this feeling.

Still occupied with his neck she mumbled: “Seems like your body’s got a different opinion.”

He tried to reply something but there came just some inarticulate sound out of his mouth.

“Y’already lay with someone, didn’t ya?” she asked while she rubbed her muzzle on his chest.

“Yes!” he was able to stutter.

“Good!” she moaned. “I’d no intention of deflowerin’ you.”

It was exciting like she rubbed her muzzle onto him. He could feel all features of it, her mouth, her cool nose, the short fur,...

Suddenly she pushed him backwards, he stumbled and fell down, landed right on the sleeping bags. He was convinced to be able to see her smile in the darkness.

She fell down in front of him, purred as she slowly crawled closer. Her purr rather sounded like the deep growl of a hungry animal. He retired instinctively. The only thing he could see in the darkness were her shimmering feline eyes which slowly got closer. He breathed heavily. He could smell her, he couldn’t remember ever having smelled a woman but somehow he knew that this was her smell, a strange strong scent of salty sweat, sweet like dry flowers and spicy like

ethereal oil. It crept into his nose, stuck to his nostrils and with every breath it filled up his lungs and thus entered his bloodstream.

Her paw landed on his chest and with one quick movement her claws ripped the shirt apart. The shreds flew off. She growled quietly in delight while she didn't take one eye of him. They reflected the few light of the stars and the moons which reached the forest ground, slanting serious eyes which now showed nothing but her unrestrained desire.

"Why are you doing this?" he stammered.

Her only reply was a hoarse growl, her hot breath waved into his face, she was that close now. It was hot and smelled strongly of old wood. Suddenly she rushed back, her claws cut through his gray fur, scratched the skin but without cutting it. But she could as well had cut him the result would have been the same as his skin burned like hell under her claws' caress until they met the resistance of his denim. Her hands fingered on his shorts and with a violent movement she removed them, he was almost dragged behind as her pull had been so strong.

Her eyes shimmered again right in front of his face. He could once again see her feline smile. Then he felt the tension which pulled his pants upwards and he looked down to see that one single finger of her hand had risen his pants, her sharp claw clearly visible as it stretched the cloth. She grinned and pulled even stronger. The cloth cut in between his buttocks, pressed onto his balls. Then the silent first ripping sound came and he could see like the fabric slowly gave way to the sharpness of her claw. She increased her pull even further almost lifted his entire abdomen up, the cloth cut into his backside, his balls ached as they were almost crushed as the cloth tightened even more but then with dry sound the cloth was torn apart, what was left of his pants fell down onto him and gave way for his erection.

He yelped as she grabbed his member. She held it in her hot, furless palm, her thump ran over its exposed smooth skin and the rougher glans, pressed into the pucker and stroke the sensible base. It felt like his entire abdomen got weightless and would lift off in the next few instants, it almost bend towards her. Her fingers held tightly onto the smooth skin, pressed it together as she slightly squeezed it. A hot stream burned his skin. Slowly she let it go and her hand wandered downwards, brushed through the thick fur off his balls which were already pressed against his body by the tightened skin. She stroke the fur, ran her hand all over the scrotum, brushed through the fur and then playfully tipped against the balls, shook them. He panted and she answered with a toothy grin.

Her face got even closer and he was forced to stare right into the slanting eyes, he could feel her breath on his throat as it blew around it just like she was ready to rip it open. He felt the primitive fear in his subconscious but in this instant he couldn't percept anything but her dark brown eyes, the pupils which trembled just in front of his own. But then suddenly she rose and pressed her chest onto his muzzle. His mouth sank into the fur and her scent overwhelmed his sensitive nose, now he no longer smelled anything else but the seductive, spicy scent of the aroused lynx girl. His muzzle brushed through the fur, tickled on his lips and in his nostrils. She grabbed his head by his hair and slowly pressed it downwards.

Thus he was unable to do anything else than explore her chest which was no longer hidden below her vest as she had somehow managed to unbutton it. Suddenly he felt like the fabric got softer, responded to his caress, it was hot and swollen from the arousal and then his lips ran over her erected nipple and instinctively he took it into his mouth. The lips pressed it together, squeezed it while his tongue ran around on the rough surface, discovered the hot uneven swollen skin, he sucked on it, dragged it inside his moist mouth, his saliva dripped from the hot skin while he tasted her salty sweat. She moaned in pleasure and held him as tight as possible while his tongue explored the shape of the small swollen breast wart, circled around it, ran over the yielding fabric, wetted everyone of its depths, everything of the uneven dotted skin of her nipple and the short fur which brushed over his mouth.

She held him tightly, shivered slightly whenever his tongue ran around the nipple. The touch broke into her and violently she tore his head backwards and pressed it down in between her breast. His muzzle drowned in the soft, much thicker fur and once more her smell overwhelmed him, it stuck to her fur and seemed just to wait for him while his lips brushed over it. He inhaled everything until it took his breath away. She moved slightly so that his mouth ran all over the soft fabric of her breast. He could feel the blood pumping through the hot texture, her breath raising and lowering her chest, the excited pounding of her heart.

She panted. His mouth pressed onto her chest, left behind a trace of hot skin that tickled so much that it longed for his mouth once more to appease these impressions. His tongue lapped her breast, brushed against the fur as it moved upwards, tousled it and thus every hair seemed to be pressed downwards into her, slightly pinching the swollen flesh, a carpet of nervous caress that moved upwards on her chest, into her head and back downwards again so that her mind trailed behind. She moaned in pleasure.

His head bumped into the sleeping bag as she pushed him backwards and rose to her feet.

She glared down onto him while she shook off the vest, hastily undid the belt of her shorts and when they fell down she kicked them away with her foot. With another quick movement she had loosened her loin cloth and it dropped down. Although he tried he couldn't distinguish anything in the darkness but the reflecting shimmer of moisture between her legs. Slowly she lowered herself again, so slowly that he was able to percept the stretching of her limbs and the muscles underneath the skin, everyone of these movements that tightened her skin when she slowly sat down again. For a moment her pelvis was just above his head and the fragrance of her juice hit him and knocked him out. It was a damp, irresistible, juicy scent that invaded him so that all of his muscles shivered in anticipation, his heart pounded so vigorously that he could feel his erected member rock in the cold air.

With stretched legs she sat down on his chest, grabbed his arms and put the hands onto her backside. He stared at her while his hands suddenly held her small muscled buttocks, he tried to squeeze them but they were so tight that his hands just slipped off so he just ran his hands all over them and her lower back, brushed

around the sensitive base of her short fluffy tail until his hands got in between her buttocks and instinctively he held on there and stretched them apart. Thus he first noticed the moisture on his chest that slowly dripped from her.

Slightly she rubbed herself on his chest, his fur tickled on her sensitive mons, sent shivers up her spine until they reached her head. She shook it to clear her mind again, to free it of this dizzy impression which almost tore her down but she resisted and focussed on the wolf below her who stared at her with blind eyes, held her backside in his hands and slowly she glided down on his stomach's rough surface. His fur brushed over hers, a silky textures between the two bodies which trapped the heat. She leaned forward, supported herself on her arms while her abdomen moved on further. They could feel their sensitive skins, the tickling of their mixed furs on the hot surface, just slightly cooled by sweat. Her hips pressed her weight onto him, traced the uneven surface of his belly and he could feel the moisture she left behind on him which mixed with his sweat.

Slowly her chest came closer until it was right above his face. She leaned right above him, her stretched legs rested upon his abdomen without touching his erected member yet. She supported herself on her wide spread arms while he still held on to her backside. His heavy breath blew over and around her chest and slowly he raised his head and first cautiously kissed one breast and as he felt how the fabric shivered due to his caress he lost his restraint and he buried his muzzle on her chest, brushed it all over her breast, over every inch. He panted as his mouth moved on and then another moan escaped her throat as she was able to grasp all of this feeling when he playfully pushed her breast with his muzzle, her skin shivered and the impression waved to and fro her spine mixed with the tension of her abdomen. It seemed like her spine reduced itself, tightened while she hang over him. She did not even notice the exhaustion of her arms she rested on, her mind was busy with devouring everything she felt on her skin when he had slightly opened his mouth and weakly covered everything he reached with kisses, squeezed the nipple between his lips while his tongue explored the small depth in its middle until it was dripping wet from his saliva and he went on to explore more of her breast. He just couldn't resist this longing which concentrated in his chest, held tightly to his heart so that it overwhelmed his head. He just held on to her buttocks, ran his mouth over her breast while her hips pressed into his abdomen and his member shivered.

Suddenly she raised her chest, smiling again. She raised her abdomen and slowly moved it backwards. He gasped soundlessly as she took hold of his member with one hand and carefully placed it underneath her mons so that he felt his member touching her labia: The swollen, round, moist fabric on the rough top of his member while she was still above him with wide spread legs. As slowly as possible she lowered her abdomen. His member pressed through the tight ring of her opening, stretched it apart as it glided upon her juice which already flew down all the length of his member. The glans pushed through her labia, pressed them apart as they slowly slipped into her. It spread throughout her, flooded into her abdomen until the sparkle tingled up inside her, her belly, her chest, her arms, her neck, her head. She shivered in delight as it faded away in her ears and she

noticed that his glans were now inside her, that they had parted her inner muscles and she held his member between her contracting labia which she felt with every stream of blood which rushed through them, tightened them a little bit more so that she felt the round shape inside herself.

His mouth was wide opened as he inhaled and simultaneously tried to grasp what was just happening. He still held her buttocks in his hands but he did not even notice, he just felt the soft, smooth fabric of her opening around the top of his member. The tension stretched every limb of his body until they were almost torn apart, it pulled away every feeling, impression, trace of life until his entire body was set afire due to this incredible friction. It pulled his chest upwards but with a violent blow she pushed him back so that he was just able to lay there while she descended and took more and more of his member into her. He could feel the smooth, wet fabric which pressed down on the rough surface of his member while its top parted her further and further, strong tight muscles stretched apart by his glans which burned and were just slightly cooled by her lubricant. Violently his hands grabbed her backside and pulled the buttocks apart.

She moaned quietly as the roughness passed by her labia, stimulated them as his member slipped inside her and mounted further and further, send shivers up in her spine which escaped her mouth as silent moans. Her senses were so sharp now that she noticed the drops of sweat which run down her face and the round shape of her chest just beneath her fur as well as the fluid in between her legs which flew around and down on him, dripped from her stretched labia. But then she sat down on him, she could feel his fur on her hips as she fully settled down, the shape of his balls between her thighs and she moaned lowly as her clitoris and labia were clenched in between their bodies. Now she held his member completely inside her, it shivered in between her smooth tightened muscles. The wave of the impression broke on her mind and washed all over her so that it took her breath away for a moment but then she just shook her head and leaned forward, supported herself on her arms while she looked into his face, smiling mischievously.

She growled triumphantly to the mindlessly staring boy.

Gently she moved her hips closer together and contracted her labia around his member. She moaned in delight as she was now able to grasp fully what she held inside her, the roughness of its skin, smoothed by her fluid while it resisted to the pressure of her inner muscles that held it tightly. Her abdomen sent shiver after shiver up her spine, every limb of her body responded to the tension, every muscles vibrated underneath the skin, radiated waves of heat that flowed to and fro inside her, broke on her chest, swirled around her lips and throughout her face until they streamed back down into her belly, to the buttocks in his hands and faded away in her hips to induce new excitement that mounted up inside her again. Soundlessly her mouth with her sharp teeth bite into the night as it responded to her pleasure.

The boy was unable to move or to understand what was happening with him. She held him tightly inside her and he had given himself up as he had been unable to resist her sheer physical power. He felt every strain inside her, the

impression overwhelmed him, held his entire body and mind captive, so that they almost broke apart but nevertheless physical pleasure welled up inside him, burst inside his belly, ravaged through his abdomen, mangled everyone of his muscles, his body rocked in painfully delightful pleasure, bucked up inside itself. He whimpered, his mouth quivered while she still smiled and slowly raised her abdomen.

Her labia burned as his member past through them, its skin slipped easily out on the coat of lubricant but she contracted her opening as much as possible, prolonged her own pleasure while his member was pressed together. He could feel the pain as it seemed to tear his innermost out, his balls ached and he now moaned in pain while she enjoyed how her opening pressed together again, came closer to itself again, her labia got free from his body, the cool night air swirled around them, they shivered and focussed her perception on the touchy fabric that was aroused more and more by the boy's sex that glided out between them. Her clit quivered in its hood, pressed against her tightly swollen labia and now every heartbeat rushed through as it induced an increase of her pleasure that swirled around her like a powerful jet of warm water that tore her up.

She let herself drop down again and moaned in delight as her opening was torn apart by his instantly mounting member. The sudden movement and the wave of warmth that washed over her, let her loose control and now she instinctively rocked on him, let her abdomen revolve around his member, leaned back and forth, slightly rose and instantly fell back again so that his member ran all over her inside, touched every hot spot that sent new warmth, new joy and new desire throughout her that radiated into her mind, outshone anything else as it mixed with the nervous anticipation of her chest and other limbs. She moved frantically, gave herself up to her own rhythm while the boy beneath her just whimpered slightly as he could feel how the tension inside him increased. His mind was drawn down into his abdomen, it was crystal clear to grasp all the different impressions that his member sent down to it. But he didn't understand just how she offered him new and new pleasure as his member moved inside her, explored all of her strong inner muscles while the taunt ring of her labia held it in place. Her offer burned through him like a column of flames that replaced his spine, reduced his limbs to cinders but without affecting his feelings so that he lost everyone of his physical restraints, his skin quivered, his muscles cramped, his abdomen bucked up unwillingly, he moaned in pleasure and something like pain as she tore everything out of him, left nothing but her own desire that transformed to joy.

He climaxed with a cry, the rush wore him out, tore the last out of him, he bucked below her, his member rocked inside her.

And with a moan of relief and delight she climaxed too as she felt his unrestrained movements inside. Her opening clenched around the rocking limb, held it as tight as possibly so that she felt it more than ever, the impression burst apart, freed the tension that now flooded all over her, an enormous wave that washed all over her, took her body away while the warm water caressed every single spot of it, it took her breath away, focussed her on the perception of the

shiver of her innermost and she was swept away by the movement, felt herself reduced to the shiver inside her. She sighed in relief as her perception got back again, backfired with all the different impressions it had gathered inside her and now she felt his shivering member and the semen that welled into her, washed away her juice, swirled around his member, pressed her muscles apart and downwards until it reached her labia and dripped down while his powerfully rocking member spurt out more semen so that everyone of its movements let it sway around inside her abdomen.

Whatever had been left was now dragged inside her. Everyone of his limbs ached, his balls seemed to implode but then the tension vanished and he fell back, completely worn out, he whimpered without knowing why as he was still unable to realize what had just happened. He could just feel this coat of warm joy that covered him and this feeling was worth every effort he might have endured. It appeased him and he lay motionlessly, panted heavily while he stared up into the trees without recognizing them.

His member just slightly shivered inside her but she still enjoyed the tickling of his semen inside her and thus did not move but still leaned forward just like she had done before. She purred with a roguish smile on her face.

Slowly she rose and his now powerless member easily slipped out as it glided on a coat of her juice and his semen. Her opening pressed together behind it, relaxed and she noticed it with satisfaction. His member slipped out of her irritable labia and she stood up. With a sigh consisting of passion, joy and contentment she stretched her arms. The mixed fluids dripped down from her thighs. She eyed the powerless boy with a playfully pitiful smile. She smirked as she noticed that he was still unable to realize what had happened and thus still lay motionlessly and was busy with breathing.

She kneeled down at his side, lowered her head to his member and started to lap it clean. She caressed the whole length of the limb, explored every roughness she had held inside her with her tongue and so tasted his bitter semen as well as her own juice that still stuck to it. She held the limp limb in her hand while she ran her tongue up and down on it, over the smooth glans, their sensible base and all the rough length down to the furry hood but she went on and ran her tongue over the fluffy fur and thus explored his balls, shortly sucked them into her mouth, played around with them in her mouth until she let them go again and concentrated on licking his member again.

He did not really notice what she did, it just pleased him, it added to this warm coat that covered him, this silky texture that she had wrapped around him and that caressed every spot of his body as it held him tightly although gently in a cloth of warmth and satisfaction.

The bitterness flowed down her throat and she took his member into her mouth, sucked it into it, held it by the glans with her lips while she sucked the last remains of semen that welled up. Her tongue ran over the smooth skin, her saliva replaced her juice while her tongue explored the round shape that she held inside, playfully dug into the narrow gap on the top, pressed the glans slightly apart so that he shivered in pain. She sucked it deeper inside, while her tongue

ran all over its length, her lips discovered every unevenness of the limb and with satisfaction she finally noticed a response to her caress: It grew thicker and stretched as it slowly erected again. As it grew larger it slipped partly out of her mouth even though she held it between her lips, it past by until there was nothing but the glans in her mouth left which she now licked and caressed with her tongue.

With one hand she grabbed his member to hold it in place while her other hand ran all over his furry belly, explored the muscled surface underneath the short hair. She could feel his arousal due to the quivering member she held in her mouth and the shivers that ran up and down his body. Her body responded to his excitement she could feel it how it mounted in her arm, flowed into her chest and mixed with what she felt in her mouth. New drops of bitterness welled up into her mouth. That was what she had been waiting for and thus his glans, glistening damply due to her saliva, slipped out of her mouth. She held it between her lips, let them run up and down while she kissed, licked and lapped the top of his member, her tongue enforcing the caress. And suddenly she let the fully erected member go and stood up straight.

Somehow he was able to percept her small, muscled body in the almost complete darkness of the surrounding wood. She just stood there and looked down on the weak boy. She grinned, her teeth shimmered in the darkness just like her slanting eyes.

He wanted to say anything but he did neither know what nor how. He just tried to respond to the lynx' glare.

Still smiling she stepped forward and slowly lowered herself again. She took his member in her hand and with a moan of satisfaction she sat down on it once more.

He tossed and turned, tried to evade the light that shone on his face but then he rolled down from the warm cloth and suddenly lay on the cool and moist earth and in this moment he understood that he was not lying in his bed. He opened his eyes the very same instant and the first thing he saw were rotten leaves that covered the soil, then he noticed the huge trunks, the mist that floated in between them, the dim sunlight that shone through, the fern, the moss, the fallen branches and his nose was filled up with the dull wet scent of a morning in the wood.

Instinctively he sat up to get off the ground. But the sudden movement was already too much for him as his head responded with a strange ache, his vision blurred and for a moment he heard nothing but the rush of his blood in his veins. Slowly his sense got back, he shook his head and with bewilderment he noticed that he wasn't just completely naked but that the fur of his abdomen was sticky with some strange almost dried fluid that smelled of salty sweat, sweet like dry flowers and spicy like ethereal oil. There were also dried stains of his own semen and now he also felt the dull pain in his balls which seemed to suffer from an incredibly strong tension which drew them together so strongly that it hurt.

While he still stared at his own body which he almost did not recognize the memories flooded back: The lynx girl, her smile, how she had held him, how she had enjoyed him, how it had overwhelmed him, how she had smiled at him when she had finished with him...

He looked around, but there was no trace of anyone left. There was absolutely no trace that there had been anybody else than him. His tattered clothes lay on the ground and he lay in his sleeping bag but there was nothing more...

"Jiddy...?" he shouted although he already knew that there would be no response.

The echo vanished in the wood and it was almost completely silent again. Just the rustle of the leaves was audible except for his own breath.

Carefully he stood up, stumbled as he was still quite weak. He shook his head again to clear his mind, closed his eyes and then opened them just to realize how cold it was outside of his sleeping bag. As quickly as he was able to he took up his clothes. There was almost nothing left of his T-shirt and of his pants was even less left. He put on his shorts as they were his only clothes left, pulled his sleeping bag together.

For a moment he stood there and eyed the place he was going to leave: There was really no sign of any other person and now- without his sleeping bag- there was absolutely nothing left which could have been indicated that something special had happened there. There was just a small empty space on the old leaves at the bottom of a redwood in a forest full of redwoods...

He turned around and went away. He tried to find a way in the undergrowth. As it had been dark last night he was unable to remember anything. But he went into the direction where some light shone through as he expected the clearing of Amalkin to be there. And after some time he really came out of the forest and suddenly stood right above the town, looked down on the shaman monument and the many wooden houses that had been build at this crossroads. There was no one to be seen, the morning's haze still drifted over the town. The sunlight was just a dim reddish shimmer in the sky as dawn had not ended yet. There was no trace of life.

Slowly he went down and without noticing the stone relic he went into town and walked up the deserted road. His eyes were lowered to the ground and he stared thoughtfully on the way he was taking while he climbed the road to his parents' house.

Still lost in his thoughts he came to the lifeless gas station and suddenly he raised his head and eyed the poor garage and the even poorer house next to it just like he had never seen it before. For some unexplainable reason he also noticed the loose beams, the paint which detached itself from the wall and the rust on the pipes for the very first time. He blinked as the first rays of the sun shone through the mist.

Without any further delay he climbed the stairs and opened the door as silently as possible. He sneaked inside, the dusty scent overcame him, the dim light inside, the memories. But he did not stop, instead went up to the second floor. His parents had certainly not noticed anything. They were still sleeping before his

father would have to get up to repair some more vehicles as he had done for almost twenty years by now and his mother would stand up a little bit later to prepare their breakfast before she would certainly go out for hunting once more.

He sneaked into his room, went straight to his cupboard, opened it, pulled his backpack out, some clothes and whatever he considered useful. He threw it inside the backpack just like his sleeping bag, tied it up and went over to his table where he had to rummage around before he had found the small can. He took all of the little money he had saved, quickly put on a sweater, pants and walking boots and then he left his room without looking back. He went down the stairs as silently as possible. He had the impression as there was some silent rustle behind the door of his parents' room but he could as well had be wrong about that. In the kitchen he took some food and put it in his backpack too.

He looked around in the kitchen until he had found a pencil which lay on the table. He hesitated but then he took a small paper and wrote a short note for his parents.

With a sigh he put the pencil aside, stretched, shouldered his backpack, looked around once again and then he opened the door and left the house he had known so well.

He walked down the deserted road until he reached the crossroad. He had often stood there and had often looked around and he knew by heart where they led: East to Kastania city, north into the Blue Ridge Mountains, west to Lake Moonfire's Silver Coast and in the south the road (which was no road at all but rather a beaten path) disappeared in the Liva Swamps. He looked up the four roads, he eyed the small wooden houses that had been constructed alongside the road. He knew everyone of them as he had never seen any other... He had always longed to know what Kastania was like...

And he walked up the road to the east, did not hesitated as the shadowy darkness of the redwood got closer and he stepped into the forest and the small figure of a wolf vanished in the darkness as it walked out of the town.

People who might have seen that figure would have said that a roamer had left the town although no one had ever seen a wolf roamer getting there for a very long time.

End of Chapter 1



Annotation 1: As feline furrs are strongly perspiring by their furless pads lots of them prefer not wearing shoes. They so-called feline spats look like knee-length socks with the parts for the toes and the ankle cut out.

Annotation 2: Roaming is an old custom which goes back to long forgotten times. A roamer is a young furr who leaves his or her hometown in order to search his or her own place in the world. It is said that it has something to do with wild animals which are searching for their own hunting grounds. But no one knows for sure.

Annotation 3: Orichalkum is a magical, metallic element that looks like bloodstone with an oily, prism like surface. It is extremely rare and thus very valuable too as it can store magical power and is being used for many spells.

Annotation 4: Demonfly- Particularly ugly, annoying but harmless insect.