

Chapter 24

I looked up at North and he grinned, opening his hand, revealing a tiny wooden baby of a growing Russian doll set. It was me, surrounded by figures, my parents and my brothers.

"Family?" Jack asked. I nodded.

"Yes... And it makes sense." Bunny gestured for me to explain.

"A child needs support, support from a family, whether they're by blood or they're adopted. A good, healthy family is what a child needs to grow into a good person. Even if that family is a single parent and their child, or grandparents raising their grandchild, etc, as long as the guardians raising the child do well, that's all the child needs." The Guardians nodded, they knew I was right.

We went to the reservation and fully intended on having a great day.

Jack and I genuinely enjoyed ourselves, playing with our powers, watching fire and ice interact, showing o to the others. It was truly special.

But, as if the universe had one last trick up its sleeve, it was all broken.

"It never works out! Fire and ice are destined to be enemies!" Pitch's voice called out from the shadows. Jack and I looked at each other, both of us irritated. What would it take to get rid of Pitch forever? Or at least get him to leave me alone? Behind us, the Guardians took defensive positions as well. Kim and her family and friends saw what was happening and quickly rushed to hide.

"You're not harming her anymore, Pitch. You've brought enough pain and misery to her as is." Jack declared.

"And Nascha isn't here to back you up anymore."

"Maybe not, but I am the Boogeyman, and I will always have fear on my side."

"I will always have my strength on my side. I don't fear you anymore. You have nothing to take away from me. I've confronted my fears and my anger, there's nothing to take."

"There will always be fear," Pitch said. Jack sighed, seemed that was always Pitch's defense.

"That may be true, but you'd have to go through hell and back to ever bring fear into me again. I won't let you. Using fear to divide, it never works. Family makes us stronger," I looked to Jack with a smile, "The Guardians are always here to protect the children of the world. Wonder, Hope, Dreams, Fun, and Family are always here to protect, especially against those like you." I stepped forward, fire glowing from my hands.

"Now, get out of here. Leave my land, leave my people, and go back to that hole in the ground from where you came. If you dare step foot here again, I will not hesitate to make you regret it." I was surprised by my tone of voice, but I did not falter. And I think my warning got to Pitch. The nightmares hissed as they all vanished one by one. I glared at Pitch, who snarled, I thought he was going to initiate one last fight, but I supposed he determined I wasn't worth the fight, and he vanished into the shadows.

I slowly lowered my defensive position and looked around at everyone. There was a look of pride in everyone's eyes. I saw Kim and her mother look at me. It was relief. I stood up for them, in a way no one else had.

It was a great feeling. Needless to say, Kim, Jacob, and their friends were delighted to see the Guardians. Kim's parents were in disbelief. It became clear that they secretly never gave up on believing, which was so rare, but it was truly remarkable. They and the Guardians all circled me. North beamed as he held a book in his arms. Jack, who was standing beside me, placed a hand on my back. I looked at him, silently asking if it was time, and he nodded. He moved to the side.

"Will you, Catori, vow to watch over the children of the world? To guard them with your like- their hopes, their wishes, and their dreams, for they are all that we have, all that we are, and all that we will ever be." I held my head high and smiled.

"I will."

"Congratulations, Catori- for you are now, and forevermore, a Guardian!"

I smiled seeing them so happy. Knowing how my people have been living for the past 100 years, they deserved all the happiness in the world. And it made me feel happy seeing them happy. I turned to Jack with a smile.

"How do you feel about being a Guardian?" He asked. I laughed shyly in response.

"It... it feels good. I know my actions in the past... weren't the wisest. But I had a lot of anger built up." He nodded.

"I know how you feel. But you got it out, and you made a difference." He brought me in for a hug and kissed the top of my head.

"And thank you for not pushing your actions on me in the beginning." He gave me a look.

"You knew?" I rolled my eyes.

"Please, I'm not blind." We both laughed at this and played around with our powers. Everyone stopped to watch our respective abilities interact with each other.

"I've never seen fire and ice interact so gracefully before." Tooth remarked.

"We've practiced." Jack grinned.

After a few days, I fully adjusted to my Guardian duties, and I held them in the highest regard, and I developed an attachment to Kim and her family, and they accepted me as well, not just the Guardians.

Despite my life ending the way it did, I had a wonderful childhood. I was happy, healthy, and I was surrounded by loving people. Having two new families to be a part of, I've never been happier.