

Chapter 5

Our first trip was to Tooth's palace. Tooth wanted to get me my tooth box, where all my teeth were... All my memories. She explained that looking into the past could give insight into what I needed for now. Though I already figured that part out. I had no idea she collected my teeth, for as far as I was concerned, the Tooth Fairy was a colonizer tale to tell children. But knowing she visited every child around the world was pretty eye-opening.

But there was a problem, it wasn't where it should be.

"No! It's not here!" Tooth cried. Jack suddenly rushed up to my side, "There's no explanation for why it's not here when everyone else's is." I took a moment to look around the magnificent palace. The shimmering golden spires of every floating tower. The beautiful view of the Wuyishan mountain range. As the Guardians discussed the situation, I wandered around the palace to get a better look for myself, I wasn't currently needed. Mini Tooth fairies flittered around me, chirping to each other, putting teeth into other children's boxes. It was quite a sight.

Suddenly I felt that uncomfortable feeling again, the one from home. I felt a chill run down my spine, and I looked around, feeling paranoid. I was being watched. Not by the Guardians.

I heard an animalistic growl from behind me and someone shouting, "Catori look out!" I whipped around just in time to see a coyote lunge towards me in attack mode, and a bolt of frost and a boomerang came flying towards me. I yelped and dove out of the way, sliding across the golden tiled floors, and accidentally falling over the edge.

"OH!" I screamed, gripping the edge as tightly as I could. I saw Tooth fly over to me as she pulled me up. I quickly came to my senses and looked around, trying to find the coyote.

"What is a coyote doing here?" Tooth exclaimed. I shook my head furiously.

"I have no idea! We need to find it!" I heard the boys yelling from another tower. Tooth picked me up and took me there, and as we landed, we saw North, Jack, Bunny, and Sandy corner the coyote, who let out an eerie, female, echoey laugh. We all froze and my jaw dropped when it transformed into a girl, slightly older than me, and out of her back, sprung the wings of an owl, messy dark brown hair like mine, and the most piercing red eyes I'd ever seen. She turned to look directly at me, and I felt this new kind of fear watch over me, like I was looking at something I should have never seen.

I fell to my knees, feeling weak, and my pained heart pounding. She laughed again, and before I could get a word out, she vanished into the shadows and all I saw next, was the shadow of an owl disappear into the caves.

I gasped. No... No no-no. As soon as she was gone, I felt the fear wash away.

"What's wrong?" Jack asked, helping me up. I turned to the group. "That's a sk-." I couldn't even bring myself to say its name. I was always taught not to, out of the paralyzing fear it would bring harm to me. Though it was at that point I realized I never considered how a skinwalker could hurt me if I was a spirit. I looked over to Sandy, who appeared to have got the message and knew what I was thinking and translated it into symbols to safely avoid saying the word outright. The others nodded, appearing to understand.

"A Navajo legend... They are Navajo priests of the highest level who choose evil over good. They're the Native American version of werewolves. They're extremely dangerous. But it's rare for women to become one."

"How do you know?" "My father and his tribal members used to tell children about the myths from other tribes. They wanted us to be aware of what was out there. Scared the ever-living hell out of us. Seeing one, or hearing one was supposed to spell a terrible curse, or even worse, death."

"Got it right on the nail." Came a silky smooth voice. I slowly turned around and craned my neck up, seeing a tall, dark figure emerge from the shadows, a black horse by his side.

"PITCH!" North bellowed from behind me. "We defeated you!" Pitch chuckled.

"It's like I said before, there will always be fear and darkness." The Boogeyman... I felt him look directly at me. "Looks like you lot can't help but recruit newbies." He snickered. "Guess it's good I took someone under my wing as well." We all glanced around puzzled before it hit me.

"We need to get out of here, now!" I exclaimed. I could hear the fear in my voice, and it wasn't safe here. I ran up to North and grabbed a snow globe from his robe and threw it ahead of me, right for the pole, and jumped through. The others didn't hesitate either and followed. Before the portal closed I fired a few warning shots of my sparky fire.

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Tooth was incredibly distressed that we couldn't find my tooth box. I assured her for the time being it was alright. Once it was safer we could go back and help her. We took the time to reorganize and think about how to handle this.

"This happened to me as well. The Boogeyman stole mine and all tooth boxes from children all over the world." Jack explained to me. "Why on earth would he do that?"

"He was jealous. He wanted to be believed in like us. But you know, he's the Boogeyman, not something a child would want to believe in." I nodded in understanding. I mean, Pitch's reasoning couldn't be argued with, but... After the Guardians told me what events had transpired after he stole the teeth, he wasn't to be trusted.

We needed a plan of action to find my tooth box and figure out what that... girl wanted.

Suddenly I felt a clench in my chest like my heart was being pinched. I fell to my knees clutching my chest. Jack and North ran to my side immediately.

"Catori! What is wrong?" North asked me. I looked up but was suffering from tunnel vision. Suddenly, I had this horrible feeling that something was very wrong.

"Take me to the reservation." I demanded, exhaling heavily, jumping into the sleigh. The desperation in my voice let me no arguments from the Guardians, they all boarded the sleigh, and through another snow globe portal, we found ourselves in the northeast corner of Arizona, within the Hopi reservation. For those who don't know, the Hopi reservation is inside the Navajo reservation. Once we got close enough to the ground, I jumped out and did a perfect roll.

Brushing myself off, I looked around, feeling very wary. Something was definitely not right...

Then we all heard the whinny of a horse in the distance. We turned to see a stampede of onyx black horses charging at us. And I froze.

We could hear the hoofbeats a mile away and thought nothing of it. But they became louder and louder and we could hear the shouts of men and the bang of rifles. The cavalry.

We had little time to react. The only thing we could do was run. I grabbed my baby brother's hand and sprinted towards the mountains, narrowly avoiding being trampled to death.

"Hania? Are you alright?" "Catori! Get behind me!" Someone yelled. I blinked and yelped as Jack grabbed my hand and threw me behind him as he fired blasts of frost and ice at the horses.

"What are you doing?!" I screamed. "They're nightmares!" "Nightmares?"

"Pitch's Nightmares! It's what he uses to scare children in their dreams! He used them four years ago to try to take over the world!" Nightmares? Real life nightmares? That was... Unsettling.

"Don't be afraid, that's how they snuff out their victims!" Bunny said, throwing his boomerangs at the nightmares. North used his mighty twin swords, Sandman used his golden dreamsand, and Tooth used her wings, and Jack used his staff.

I had to do something. I couldn't let them fight alone. I took a few steps back and twirled my hands around, forming a ball of glowing fire between them.

"Stand to the side Jack!" I yelled. With all the force I had within me, I threw that ball of fire, causing an explosion of black sand that rained down on us. The fire self-extinguished, so none of us got burned. But then, out of the mist, Pitch emerged, with a winged figure beside him.

"Pitch!" North yelled, wielding and swinging his swords around. There was a dark chuckle, but it wasn't Pitch's. It was winged- It was the skinwalker!

"What is your name?" I demanded, doing my best at speaking Navajo. "Why should it matter to you?" She replied in Navajo smoothly. As if her being what she was didn't give it away, her speaking Navajo definitely did.

"I'm asking the questions. And answer it, what is your name?" "Nascha." Nascha... Nascha... Why was that name so familiar? How did I know that name?

"What the hell are you staring at?" She snapped. I shook my head and didn't answer her. She didn't say another word and vanished into the shadows once again.

"Never mind my little assistant. She's still getting used to having a boss." Came that silky smooth voice from behind me. I whipped around to see the towering black figure of Pitch glare at me with an intensity that did scare me. I did my best to not show how afraid I was.

"Why did you take her as your pupil?" I demanded. "Why do you ask so many questions?" He retorted. My eyes rapidly scanned my surroundings for the Guardians, but they were hidden by the mix of desert and black sand.

"I like to know the answers, good or bad." "I suggest you be wary of what you ask whom." He replied. Then, just like that, he vanished. The dust and sand thinned out and the Guardians approached me. I was still confused.

"What happened?" Bunny asked. I shook my head. "I-... I don't know. He just disappeared." I replied. Pitch's remark was swirling through my head now.

"Catori! What's wrong?" I rubbed my temples, I didn't want to dwell on it too much at the moment. But North read me well enough.

"Pitch knows something we don't." North mused to himself. He stroked his beard and began to think.

"I think we need to find that sk-." He begins, I whip my head around alarmed and stare at North like he's gone crazy.

"Do NOT say its name out loud." I hissed. He stopped. "I feel that this is a matter I have to pursue. If either of you get involved, you're going to get hurt. They are extremely dangerous." I said.

"But what about you?" Tooth asked, looking concerned, and rightfully so.

"Talking to someone who looks like you tends to be easier."