

Chapter 13

In The Flesh

Rebecca snuggled deeply into a warm, thick blanket trying to recall where she was. Her head throbbed, which struck her as odd. She did not want to get up. The soft blanket snored, waking her from her groggy slumber.

She opened her eyes, only to be blinded by morning sun shining off of the recently moistened scenery. She clamped her eyes shut, her pounding head doubling its tempo.

“What’s wrong with me?” she wondered. Eyes still closed she rubbed her forehead. Her fingers wandered over a large bump. Rubbing it seemed to make her head pound less.

“That’s unusual,” she thought. Something was definitely out of the ordinary. The only way to find out what was going on was to brave the bright morning sun.

Squinting, she opened her eyes a crack. Slowly her eyes adjusted to the light. Looking around, the snoring blanket took shape as the bear they had talked with yesterday.

Rebecca reached up to rub her aching head, but stopped short with a gasp.

“My hands!” she shouted, staring in disbelief. The startled bear woke up with a grumble.

“Yes, hands,” he sighed. “Grabby hands that like to pull fur when you’re asleep,” he added with a glare.

Rebecca sat down on the nearest stump, still eyeing her hands in disbelief.

“B-b-but,” she stammered, “they’re real!” She wiggled each digit for added emphasis.

“You don’t say,” said the bear, rolling his eyes. “How shocking,” he added, patting down cowlicks in his fur as best he could. “Now if you don’t mind, I’m hungry,” he said walking towards the river.

Rebecca followed, not paying much attention to where she was going, but rather gazing at her hands and stumbling over rocks in the path.

The old man was sitting on an old driftwood log, fishing pole in one hand, whistling happily to himself. Rebecca sat next to him.

“What did you do to me?” she asked.

He did not answer, but thrust his hand into one of his many bulging pockets and produced a mirror, which he handed her.

Rebecca took the mirror, feeling the cool metal frame and smooth glass. Then she caught a glance of her face and gasped. Her eyes, as blue as the glacier ice, looked back at her in the mirror. Eyebrows and eyelashes bordered them. Her white fabric face was a rosy pink, nipped by the chill morning air. There were no signs of cloth save for her dress and red satin bow in her hair. She was no doll, anymore.

“I’m a girl,” she said softly.

“You were always a girl,” the old man said matter-of-factly. “Now, you are a human girl.” He cast his line out into the water.

“Why did you do this?” Rebecca asked.

“You want to go back to your human family. I think you need to know what it is like to be one. Your friend is now a real horse,” he said, pointing out past the river. Rebecca could see what she assumed to be Silver Sky galloping along the banks, near the forest edges.

“I think you will find that humans are not all you expect them to be,” the old man continued. “On the rest of your journey, you will encounter quite a few of them. You and Silver Sky will have a lot of decisions to make. Sometimes, you will have help in making them. Other times, you won’t.”

“But how will our children know who we are?” Rebecca protested.

“When you make your final decision, then you will return to your true forms.”

Rebecca thought about that while watching Silver Sky play near the river. He was obviously enjoying his new body. She, however, still had a headache. She rubbed the bump on her forehead.

The old man chuckled. “Yes, you did have a pretty good fall yesterday. That bump will go away in a day or so. You will have to be more careful than you have been,” he said, pointing to her arm.

Rebecca looked where he was pointing. In the spot that her arm had ripped, after crashing in front of the glacier, she had a thin white scar.

“You can’t just sew these bodies up,” the old man instructed. Just then his fishing pole jerked and he reeled in a large salmon. He held it up proudly.

“Now, I’ll give you a while to think about this. I’m going to go prepare breakfast. You’ll feel hungry soon,” he said wandering back towards the edge of the forest.

Rebecca sat lost in thought. This was simply too much. She looked at herself in the mirror. All her features were similar to when she was a doll. Her curly red hair was there, along with her blue eyes, and the same dress, only larger now. She took off her shoes, dipping her toes into the icy water of the river.

Digging into the pocket of her dress, she pulled out her notebook. This had also undergone a change and was larger, as was the pen. She began taking note of all that she felt, writing as many details as she could. The smell of the air, the feel of the water and stones on her feet, that dreaded bump on her head, everything.

As she wrote, Silver Sky came up to her.

“Isn’t this the greatest, dearest?” he asked, brightly. “I’ve been having so much fun just running,” he continued, not giving her a chance to answer. “I can run in an hour what would have taken us all day to do when we were small.”

Rebecca looked at him with a smile. It was nice to see him in a good mood.

“Did wolf talk to you?” she asked, looking towards the old man.

“Nope,” he responded, taking a quick sip from the river. “Bear just told me that we were real now. Though you did scare me when you fell off that stump!”

“That’s all they told you?” quizzed Rebecca.

“Yep.”

Rebecca sat and thought for a moment. For the first time, she could smell the flowers on the air. She so wanted this to be a good day, but the nagging issues that wolf had brought up were tugging at her.

She stood up and looked at Silver Sky.

“Oh great, you’re taller than me now,” she sighed.

“And faster,” the no-longer model horse grinned.

“Time for breakfast!” called the old man from near the stump Rebecca had fallen off of.

“This should be interesting,” Rebecca smirked.