

Chapter 15

Preperations

Silver Sky was feeling very tired, but still quite excited. It seemed he had been running about for hours, seeing just how fast he could go. Who knew that running could be so tiring and fun. Still, he was sure they could not absolutely cover more distance than they had been.

Nibbling here and there on grasses he thanked his lucky stars that unlike Rebecca, he hadn't been reduced to eating dead things like Wolf and the ravens. The thought made him feel slightly green. Much better to be savoring the flavors of living plants.

He looked over to where Rebecca, Wolf and Bear were sitting. They seemed deep in talk. Probably planning and deciding what to do next. Rebecca was always thinking and planning, he thought. She seemed so much better at it than he was.

But she didn't seem to be enjoying their transformation as much as he was. She seemed more worried. Even from this distance, he could see that she was upset with what Wolf was telling her. He wondered what they were talking about.

Plucking up his nerve, he wandered over to where the three were chatting. As he approached they seemed to quiet down noticeably. That made him more than a little bit nervous. But then Rebecca smiled broadly.

"I think we know our next step," she said. She related the story of Joe to Silver Sky, who found it amazing that there were other toys out there like them who had taken the same path.

Rebecca grabbed a stick and began sketching out a map in the dirt, scratching out the path of the river as Wolf and Bear had described. She explained the path to Joe. She did her best to postpone the idea of going on a boat ride. She knew Silver Sky hadn't enjoyed flying, and didn't think he'd relish the idea of leaving solid ground again.

But Silver Sky surprised her. When she started talking about an ocean voyage, he seemed to get excited. Not quite the reaction she was expecting.

"Timothy always wanted to see the ocean," he explained, seeing Rebecca's quizzical look. He thought for a moment. "I wonder if he ever did," he questioned quietly. "If he hasn't, I can tell him all about it!"

Rebecca was relieved that her friend wasn't afraid of the idea. She looked at Wolf hoping to get some more information.

"How long do you think it will take to get there?" she asked.

Wolf twirled his mustache around his finger, thinking hard. "I suspect you could make it in about a week," he answered. He pointed to a spot on Rebecca's scratched out map. "You're going to have to cross the river around here," he noted.

Looking at Silver Sky, he added, "You'll probably have to carry her across. The water is too deep for her to cross, but should be fine for you."

Silver Sky thought about that for a moment. He rather liked the idea of being depended on for something. Besides, he'd had a lot of fun playing in the river earlier. But then, he did not have someone on his back at the time, either. Still, how hard could it be? He had carried their pack without much problem.

Wolf turned back to Rebecca. "Your friend, here, can eat the grasses and plants that are all along the way. But you, well, you are going to need more. It's not berry season, so you won't find much along the trail." He twirled his mustache again, stood up and disappeared into the trees. When he returned he carried a canvas backpack which smelled sweetly of campfire.

Setting the pack in front of the two, he lifted a flap on the top. "Food," he said simply. "You'll need to eat several times a day. Your stomach will let you know when." He pointed to some strips of fish, the source of the smokey smell. "Those should last you until you get to Joe. There's also some bread and dried fruit. The fruit you can share with Silver Sky."

Silver Sky eyed the leathery fruit with some skepticism. The grasses and ferns around him looked more appetizing, and less dead.

Bear snuffled at the canvas bag. "I hope you saved some for me," he grumped.

Wolf laughed. "You can get your own whenever you like," he said. "Something tells me that no one has ever taught these two how to catch a fish."

Bear looked at the two incredulously. "You just grab it with your teeth," he instructed, as though everyone should know such a simple idea. "Heck, sometimes they just jump in."

Silver Sky looked at the bear with his wide. "That's disgusting!" he exclaimed.

Bear looked at the horse. "Why?"

Silver Sky searched for the words to answer. The thought of a flippy floppy squirming fish in his mouth made his grey face go green. "These guys are weird," he whispered to Rebecca.

Rebecca didn't relish the idea of a raw fish, either. "I think we'll take our fish cooked," she smiled, pushing the idea of catching a fish with her teeth far from her mind.

"When you get to Joe's, I want you to really sit down and talk with him," said Wolf, trying to get the conversation back on track. "You two have some major decisions ahead of you, and they shouldn't be taken lightly. You will need to think hard on what he has to tell you."

"How much farther is it, after we get there?" asked Silver Sky.

"I can't answer that for you," Wolf said sadly. "It's out of my territory. Joe can help you figure that out, though. And maybe he can help you cut some time off, if his boat is up to the task."

"Up to the task?" asked a suddenly very worried Rebecca.

"He's a toy soldier, not a mechanic, my dear," responded Wolf with a grin.

With that, he stood up. "I think it's time you two considered heading out. The morning is wearing on, and it will be noon, soon. We've wasted a perfectly good morning's walk just chatting. If you want to get anywhere, you'll need to walk most of the day."

Wolf picked up the backpack and handed it to Rebecca. "Remember to use this wisely. Nothing is more painful than being hungry with nothing to eat."

Rebecca shouldered the bag and gave Wolf and Bear big hugs. While the past couple of days had been the most bizarre of her life, she had a feeling she would miss this odd couple.