

Chapter 17

Lost in Translation

It was during their trek the next day that they came upon the fork in the river. According to Wolf, this would lead them to the ocean and the fishing village that Joe lived in. This part of the river seemed much more lazy. The water seemed to meander in crazy loops that had them walking long paths and not getting very far.

The long walk was not dampening their spirits, though. After yesterday's break, they had both found themselves in better moods. Finally finding the fork in the river raised them even more. Now, they just had to find a good place to cross.

They had tried a couple of spots, so far. At each one, they had found that even though the water seemed slower, it was still moving fast enough to make them uncomfortable. And it was deep. They kept hoping to find a bridge, but one never materialized. Besides, if there was one, Wolf would have mentioned it, right?

"You could get dizzy walking this river," noted Silver Sky after a particularly curvy section that had them feeling as though they had walked several miles, despite the fact that they could see where they started.

Rebecca smiled. She rather liked this stretch of the river. The sun was out and the weather warm. Instead of the loud rush of the main river, this was more of a soft gurgle as the water passed over rocks. It was relaxing. Even the birds chirping sounded playful, which, after a moment struck her as odd.

"I don't understand them," she said to Silver Sky. "Sometimes I think I catch bits of words, but it's not a complete conversation."

Silver Sky looked at her, somewhat confused. "They're talking about the weather, food, summer, love and stuff," he said. "Can't you hear it?"

Rebecca stopped walking and just listened. She could hear the birds distinctly. But it was most assuredly not the lucid, intelligent conversation of the ravens, or any other animal they already encountered. It was beautiful, to be sure, but it seemed like random notes, trills and warbles. It was not words.

She shook her head. "I can hear, but I can't understand," she said.

Concerned, Silver Sky called to one of the nearby birds, a fatty little bird with black head and wings, and a white body. It flitted over and landed on a branch.

"What do you want? Do you have any food? What's your name? Don't try to catch me. Do you have any food? What do you want?" the bird asked all at once, while cocking its head from side to side.

"Uhm, My name's Silver Sky and this is Rebecca," he answered, a bit taken aback at all the questions.

"I'm Corvis. I'm hungry. Do you have any food? What do you want? Don't move over there. That scares me. Did you see that squirrel?" the bird continued on.

"Well, no. I just..."

"Wait!" shouted Rebecca. "I can understand you," she said pointing to Silver Sky. "But the bird is just chirping. It's not making any sense."

"Is she stupid? Does she have food? What's her problem? What does she want? Why are you here?" the bird asked, quickly.

"He wants to know if you have any food," Silver Sky instructed Rebecca. Rebecca pulled off the backpack, grabbing some dried fruit out and offering it to the bird. Corvis quickly flitted down, grabbed as much as he could carry and then quickly disappeared, back into the trees.

Rebecca watched the bird go, sadly. "I don't understand them, anymore," she cried.

"I guess you're becoming more human," Silver Sky suggested.

Rebecca sat down, shushing Silver Sky so that she could listen. All about them birds chirped and squawked. A pair of geese swimming in the water honked as they passed. None of it, not a sound, made any sense to her.

As she sat there straining to make sense of the sounds, Corvis returned. This time he had a friend with him.

"What do you want? Do you have any food? We're hungry. Why is she still here? Does she have more?" asked the birds together.

Silver Sky looked up towards the two birds. "She doesn't understand you," he said simply.

"Understand what? What's to understand? Why are you here? Do you have anymore food? Did you see that squirrel?" they asked.

"What? What squirrel? We just gave you some food!" answered Silver Sky getting more and more flustered by all the questions.

"Squirrel?" Rebecca asked simply.

"Yes, dearest, they keep asking if we saw a squirrel."

"It's a bad squirrel. He took our food. Do you have any food? Does she have more food? Don't get closer. Where are you from?" the birds continued peppering Silver Sky with questions.

"What squirrel? Where is he?" asked Silver Sky, feeling slightly better at having gotten in a couple of questions, himself.

Both birds pointed in different directions with their wings.

Silver Sky looked over his shoulder, but didn't see any squirrel.

"Do you see any squirrels?" he asked Rebecca.

Rebecca stood up and looked in the direction Silver Sky was looking. Suddenly, she heard the ruffling of feathers, as the two birds descended on her backpack. Each grabbed as much as they could before Rebecca could shoo them away. They flew quickly back into the trees.

"Well, I understood that plainly enough," groused Rebecca, grabbing the backpack and closing it up. "Let's get moving," she instructed.

Silver Sky did not have to be told twice. He did not like being tricked by these birds.

As they prepared to leave, four more birds showed up.

"I heard you have food. Do you have food? Why is she mad? I'm hungry. Can I have some food?" asked the first in the group.

Before this group had even finished asking questions, a second group of four flew in.

"What are you doing here? Do you have food? I'm hungry. Can you share some food? Have you seen that squirrel?"

"I'm not falling for that again," stated the horse, angrily.

Rebecca looked on, in confusion. She was only making out Silver Sky's half of the many conversations that had suddenly begun. As she moved to ask Silver Sky what was going on, several more birds flew out of the forest and began chattering at Silver Sky.

"No! We haven't got enough for all of you," Silver Sky shouted.

The birds flitted about nervously, hopping from limb to limb. "No food? What's in the pack? Do you have any food? What's that over there? Did you see that? Who are you?"

Silver Sky looked up at the tree. How many of these black and white birds were there now?

"Let's start moving," he told Rebecca, who agreed without hesitation.

"Where are you going? Is there food? Can we come? Who are you? Can we have some food?" The birds followed the two from tree to tree. As they did, more of their brethren showed up, until the sky seemed nearly filled with them.

Silver Sky and Rebecca began to walk faster. As they did the birds simply increased their pace, both in speed and questions. It wasn't long before the two had broken into a sprint. By now, the birds

patience had seemed to finally wear out and they took flight towards the runners. One by one they pecked at the straps on Rebecca's backpack until it finally fell away. Satisfied, the birds pounced on the backpack, ripping it apart until the food inside spilled to the ground.

Rebecca and Silver Sky continued running until the sounds of the hungry birds grew quiet.