

Chapter VIII: The Starwoods



And there I was, once again, on my way to The Starwoods. The first time I was lost, the second time I was too tired, so the third time should be the right one. I had my hopes up high to reach them by the end of the day. I had the map back in my hands and I followed the way I had mapped out. I marked it with some red berry juice so it would be more visible in the dark. Not that I thought I would need to go through the night again, but just in case! Again I started feeling the warm morning sun on my skin, a welcome feeling in the frisky morning air.

I looked around and saw dewdrops in the cobwebs between the trees which crossed my path. I heard the birds sing their song of joy, they almost made me want to sing along with them. I even started humming to their song which sounded like nothing else you'd ever heard before. For hours and hours, I rode through trees and high grass until I reached the edge of a forest. I put Aimilios to stop and I stared at the many trees which lay ahead of me. I looked at the map to make sure and indeed I was there. I had, after all this time, finally reached The Starwoods! I sighed.

"We made it!" I said happily while I stroked my horse's neck. After all, he was the one who carried me all the way here! I took an apple out of my bag and gave it to him. He clearly enjoyed it, the apple was completely devoured before I could blink, so we continued the last part of our trip. I remembered reading in my mothers' book that the coven lived deep inside The Starwoods. So it was time to enter this big forest.

As we walked through the trees, the high grass turned into those typical forest paths and the deeper we went, the more life I saw. I saw little bunnies jump into their holes, squirrels climbing the tall trees, several types of birds hiding between the branches and singing beautiful songs. The smell of the fresh wind blowing through the trees had a calming effect. The deeper I went into this forest, the more I could see, the more I could smell, and the more I could hear... After walking for a while I noticed that Aimilios was having troubles moving through the forest. The path we once walked on was gone. We had arrived in the wilder part of the forest. I guided my horse as well as I could and hoped I wouldn't have to leave him behind. It was really hard to go underneath the hanging branches. We fought our way through the close-grown forest. Until, finally, we saw the path again.

"That was tough!" I said out loud. During our trip from the castle to The Starwoods, I'd been talking a lot to myself and my horse. And of course to the deer and other creatures I encountered. But mostly to myself.

Then out of nowhere, I heard sounds once more. Not the sound of a deer this time, but people. I made Aimilios stop for just a moment to listen. I could hear kids yelling

and playing with each other! I gave my horse a signal to start walking again. And so I followed the sounds until I saw something between the trees. I had arrived at the village of the last remaining witches!

"The Neoma's!" I said happily and relieved. It was after all the most exhausting journey I had ever taken. I had hardly ever left the castle on my own before. Only when I went to ride Aimilios. But I never made it this far before. Happy as I was, I walked the last part to the village, which took less than a few minutes. "We have finally reached them!" I still couldn't believe it. I thought the more I say it out loud, the more I believe it.

Then the trees stopped. I arrived at a sort of circle shaped field, surrounded by trees, giving shelter to just a few houses. But the further I looked the more houses I saw. It was bigger than Leto, the village I was in earlier. The houses looked so... I don't even know how to describe them. I think the right word is magical. They were made of twigs and wooden stumps. The roofs contained colorful leaves collected from the trees around the village. Between the twigs, there were little flowers in all kinds of pink, purple, and blue. It was so beautiful. I had no idea which flowers they were, I had never seen them before. They even glowed a little, not in full sunlight, but those on the roofs of some houses hidden in the shade of the trees did.

"Moon Flowers", a voice suddenly said. A mysterious looking boy, stepped out of the woods.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to scare you."

"How did he know what I thought?"

"I'm a mind reader, that's why!" He replied. "That's my power. I can read people's minds."