Terka

The woods were dark and quiet. The wind howled through the trees making a wind chime noise. Terka, a young black wolf, hid behind the looming trees. Two wolf-lengths away a lonely stream whistled by. The smell of prey burned on Terka’s tongue, filling his mind with one word, “hunt”. It echoed through his mind, making him dizzy. Slowly Terka padded towards the scent, careful not to make a sound. The buck had been separated from its herd. Maybe split up by another wolf attack.

To the left, twenty wolf-strides away, Terka spotted his mate, Lara, flicking her tail and curving into the tall grass. After they enclosed an arch around the buck, Terka stopped and waited, feeling the grass caress his black pelt.

Terka heard the signal, past the temporary peace, past the owl that hooted in the tree, and to Lara who was on the other side of the prey. She used her claws and scraped them across the autumn earth, signaling Terka to wait. But Terka longed for the kill and blood lust made his hackles tense. Only that slight movement of fur against grass alerted the buck. It raised its great head; majestic horns clawed at the dawning sky.

Lara barked softly and both wolves lunged. They pushed through the air, making no sound as their shadows fell upon the buck’s back. Lara’s mouth widened around the buck’s neck. Terka’s teeth sank into the buck’s leg. The buck kicked and tossed its head ant then began to run. It kicked up dust into Terka’s eyes while Lara was thrown to the ground. Terka jumped on its back and dug his hind claws into its haunches and ripped at its neck with mighty jaws.

Finally, blood gushing from its neck, the buck began to slow and finally fell. Lara burst from the undergrowth and gave the killing bite, sinking her bite into the main artery under the chin. The buck’s dark eyes went suddenly blank and empty. Terka and Lara were left panting in the scarlet air. Lara’s pale muzzle was stained with blood and Terka’s pelt was matted and clumped with blood. A kill like this was rare for lone wolves and Terka and staring at the buck’s haunches, Terka couldn’t help but feel pride soaking into his pelt, deeper than the blood of his prey.

After the feast when their bellies were full, Terka and Lara lay by the remains of their kill under the dawning sky. The ground started to warm and the breeze dried their wet pelts and with their pelts gently brushing together they fell asleep.

It seemed like seconds but suddenly Terka and Lara were awakened by a loud “Bang!” Both of them jumped up. It was past noon and the ground was hot beneath Terka’s pads. Both wolves stood startled and looked around. Whatever the sound had been, it made his hackles tense and his tail straighten like a branch. Seconds later, another “Bang” sounded in the air. The ground beside Terka seemed to explode with flying earth. Lara bolted, lost in the ocean of grass.
Terka quickly followed, right after a third “Bang” echoed. He swiftly looked back and spotted a strange, flat-faced creature in the shadows of the trees just before he was swallowed by the grass. Terka barked for Lara...no answer. He could not feel the drum of her paws in retreat nor could he hear her panting close by. Suddenly he became aware of a burning sensation on his ear. He felt blood trickle down the side of his face and realized his ear had been nicked. Before he could worry about this, he was brought back to reality by a strange sound -- heavy steps coming from behind him. Instinctively he knew not to run but instead went into a crouch in the tall grass. The creature Terka had spotted moments before came into view. This strange creature was very tall. The grass came to its belly, which was flat and stretched up to huge shoulders upon which sat his muzzle-less head on top of a short neck. It had four legs with two at its side.

The creature’s deformed “paws” held a long branch that shimmered in the sun. Terka allowed his eyes to travel down to the tip of the branch. His hackles began to rise as his senses screamed for him to run. He knew this was something to be feared. The two-legged creature stopped and crouched down and with its front paws softly touched where Terka had been standing moments before. It was Terka’s blood! Terka didn’t wait to see more. He turned and ran, not caring about the noise he made now. He just ran and didn’t stop until the familiar forest smells filled his nose.

He was worried about Lara. He sniffed the air, which was getting colder with the coming night. No trace of her scent was there. A sudden snap of twigs made Terka jump into the shadows of the trees. Just then the same two-legged creature emerged from the trees. It was almost fully night now and the creature was having trouble finding its way around the clearing. Terka mentally added poor eyesight to the creature’s list of faults.

He realized suddenly that the two-legged was struggling, holding onto something large slung over its shoulder. With a sickening feeling, Terka realized what it was even before the creature flung it carelessly to the ground. The sight of Lara’s motionless body shocked him with deathly grief. The ground suddenly seemed much colder beneath Terka’s paws and the sky darker. His paws seemed to drum the forest floor a lot louder in his ears as he ran away, ran away forever. Away from his home...away from the two-legged and away from the pups that had been coming next summer. Now he was truly a lone wolf with only the cold stars to comfort him.

Written by
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