

I landed with a bump. Groaning, I looked up to find Silver stood over me. We were outside the lion enclosure which was surrounded by families. I stood, hand on my twisting stomach.

‘Why don’t people react to us just appearing?’

‘It doesn’t work that way,’ Silver said. ‘Where should we start?’

I held up a hand and pointed to a nearby bin. Trotting over, I emptied my meagre stomach contents into it and then sat down on the floor.

‘You are unwell?’

‘Time travel really doesn’t suit me,’ I told her, wiping my mouth and grimacing. I stood and looked around the zoo, spotting the elephant, standing on the terrace being admired by small children, and behind us, the first nocturnal house. I looked down at the crumpled photos in my hand.

‘This is what they look like. Hopefully they’ll do as Bane did and keep coming back in the hope of finding their way home.’

‘Even the little girl?’

I swallowed hard.

‘God, I hope so. Let’s start in the nocturnal house.’

The search of the nocturnal house was embarrassing and fruitless. Lacking any other ideas, we started a walk around the zoo going clockwise from the lion enclosure. I was at a loss, wracking my brain for ideas as Silver chattered happily by my side. We studied the faces of those around us as we walked. I tried my best to ignore those who stared at my strange clothing but no one seemed too bothered. Not enough to make a fuss.

‘He loves you,’ Silver said, as we passed the penguins.

‘Who does?’

‘The man you were with.’

‘Oh.’ I hoped she meant Bane. ‘Yeah, he does.’

‘And you love him?’

‘Yeah.’

‘Why?’

I smiled. It was a good question.

‘Because he saved my life. He taught me everything I know about hunting, he makes me laugh and he infuriates me and he makes me happy...’ I trailed off. It was all true, every word.

‘Are you married?’

‘What? No.’

‘Why not?’

I gave Silver a sidelong look.

‘Why do you ask?’

‘If two people love each other, they marry.’

‘Are you married?’

‘I’m engaged.’ Silver beamed. She held up her left hand and showed me the delicate diamond ring.

‘We got engaged last night.’

‘Congratulations. Who’s the lucky man?’

‘His name is Charles.’

‘Is he a kitsune?’

‘No.’

I looked up at Silver, hesitating in my next step.

‘He’s here? In the fifties?’

Silver nodded.

‘That’s why you opened the time portal?’

‘No. But that’s why it stayed open. I am truly sorry about your friends. I never meant for people to be hurt.’

‘But you fell in love.’

‘I did and I forgot myself. I’ve been travelling through time for the best part of forty years. I like this time. I was watching the seals when I met him. He’s their keeper.’

‘Does he know what you are?’

‘No,’ Silver said, suddenly guarded.

‘It’s ok. I won’t tell him. I know how difficult it is when you’re different.’

‘But the man you love made you different. Without him, you would have been like everyone else.’

‘No. I knew about the world of supernatural beings before I met Bane. He saved me, he taught me to protect myself. All the rest was my own choice.’

‘But you don’t want to marry him?’

I looked at Silver. We had gone full circle and were back at the lion enclosure.

‘If I marry him then that’s it. No more chances for a normal life. I’ll be stuck in this world of death and blood with no hope for escape.’

Silver raised a perfect eyebrow at me.

‘Do you really believe that? That sounds like an excuse that you’ve been telling yourself.’

I shuffled my feet and looked away. I did a double take and looked down at the photographs in my hand.

‘There!’

‘What?’

‘That’s Katy. Look.’ I pointed to a small girl in a blue dress. She was watching the lions and holding the hand of a woman who had her back to us. I moved, walking backwards, then sideways, trying to get a good view of the woman’s face. My breath caught in my throat. It couldn’t be them. This had been too easy.

‘Maggie?’ I said softly as I approached the woman and child. The woman turned. It wasn’t Maggie.

‘Can I help you?’

‘Sorry. I thought you were someone else. But yes. I’ve been looking for little Katy here.’ Katy’s big brown eyes stared up at me. ‘My name’s Emily,’ I told her. ‘Your father sent me. He really misses you.’

‘You know her father?’ The woman asked, her grip tight on Katy’s hand.

‘Yes. He’s terribly worried about her,’ I said, realising that this might be more difficult than I’d originally thought. ‘Thank you for looking after her. Lucky you were here visiting.’

‘Katy loves it here. She insists,’ the woman said.

‘We informed the police,’ I continued, the giddiness in my voice dropping. ‘Strange, that we should find her only now.’

‘I told the police,’ the woman said quietly, making no effort to hide her lies. I held out my hand to Katy.

‘Come on, Katy. We’re going home.’

Katy looked between me and the woman who had taken her in.

‘Prove it,’ she said defiantly. I smiled despite myself.

‘Your dad’s name is Craig. I have a photo of you, see? He’s waiting, in the nocturnal house, where you disappeared. The year is 2012, Katy.’

The little girl’s eyes lit up and she yanked her hand from the woman’s in one swift motion. She moved to stand beside me and looked up shyly at the woman who gawped at me.

‘You can’t just take her. How do I know that you’re telling the truth?’

‘Emily?’

‘Me? You didn’t even take her to the police. How do you think her parents are feeling?’

‘Emily?’

‘What?’ I turned to Silver.

‘The three hours are nearly up.’

‘They are?’

‘You have ten more minutes before the portal closes.’

‘What?’ I screamed. ‘But we haven’t found Maggie.’ I took Katy’s hand in mine.

‘Then she is lost.’

‘No. No, you have to give us more time. Please.’

‘I can’t.’

‘You can. You opened this portal. You have control! Katy,’ I knelt down in front of the little girl, vaguely aware of the woman rushing away to find a member of staff. ‘Did you see a woman? She looked like this? She came through the portal too, do you remember her?’

Katy studied the photo and shook her head.

I stood and looked around, hoping that Maggie would simply appear.

‘Emily.’

‘Wait. Maggie?’ I shouted the name. And again, and again. I could feel Katy become agitated and I tightened my grip on her.

‘Stop her! That woman is stealing my child!’ The woman reappeared, screaming and pointing at me. The whole crowd turned from the lions to look at us. I barely noticed.

‘Emily, she is lost.’

‘No. She has a little boy. We need to find her. Maggie?’

‘I won’t be coming back with you,’ Silver said.

I stopped and drew breath.

‘One more hour? Please.’ I could feel the crowd close in on us as people began shouting.

‘It doesn’t work that way,’ Silver said gently, placing a hand on my shoulder. The world began to spin and my legs gave way beneath me.

I zipped up my duffel bag and did one last search of the hotel room. It was empty of anything personal; we were moving on. I wondered when I would next see a happy ending, tried to remember the last one. Ray’s rage and grief had been catastrophic. His silence had enveloped me as he turned his back on my poor explanations and apologies and walked away.

At least we had found Katy. Craig’s face upon seeing his daughter emerge from the nocturnal house was something engraved forever in my memory but Katy might have trouble letting the situation go and I tried not to think about the nightmares that may follow. Bane and myself had avoided the press briefing that evening as the police tried to explain how the missing girl had just turned up and sent out another appeal for Maggie, the single mother of one.

I picked up my bag and found my hotel door key, trying to focus on other things. I was eager to reach my next temporary home, so that I might search for Silver who married a zoo keeper, to know

what happened to her. Maybe I would find Maggie too, maybe she had found a happy ending elsewhere.

Silver's words still rang in my head and I questioned, yet again, whether I should marry Bane. To just give in and stop the endless fighting against whatever on earth it was that I was fighting. Fate? A soul destroying life? Or maybe I was just holding onto defiance for no good reason.

Bane walked into the room.

'All done?'

'Yup,' I walked past him and out of the room, heading down to the lobby.

'So she created a time portal, endangering the lives of hundreds, just because she was in love?'

'Yeah, the funny things that love makes you do, huh?'

'Yeah, funny,' Bane looked down at me and I smiled sadly up at him. Stopping, he wrapped his arms around me and hugged me tightly. I breathed him in and kissed him on the cheek.

'The funny things.'