

"C'mon, Sugar. The scarf isn't that bad and it looks adorable on you."

Ace spoke while outfitting his little sister for a stroll through the woods. Since she was still pretty new, only being alive for 8 months or so, he wanted to make sure she got to experience everything a child should. He already checked off making sandcastles, being up all night, playing childhood games, and the occasional prank, so he wanted to shift into casual activities. That was where their walk in the woods would come in.

"But it's so itchy. Are all scarves like this?"

Sugar replied as she gently scratched her neck. It was pretty with the red and pinkish tones, yet it was as if a hundred tiny feathers rubbed against her neck, chest, shoulders, and sometimes chin.

"Not all of them are, but I think this is the only one you have that's clean. Would you like to not have it on?"

"Yes please."

It didn't take much for Ace to remove the scarf and neatly fold it to place it back in her wardrobe. All she had were little mittens, a sweater, and leg warmers to keep her from getting chilly. He wasn't sure if the outfit would keep her warm, but it'd provide some warmth. The two let their family know they were heading out, and went to the woods near the clubhouse. Every leaf changed in a wide variety of red, yellow, and orange, and the path Ace led her down was a tunnel of warm colors. Branches were hanging just low enough for them to take a couple of leaves, but what he really wanted to do was let her take in the scenery for what it was; nature being beautiful

Sugar looked around with big curious eyes. The path was a new thing to her, so she wanted to explore every part of it and began to point at various things.

"Brother, look at how pretty those bushes are!"

"Mhmm. That one has nice colors every year."

"And that one! The purple leaves and pink flowers are pretty, too!"

She kept pointing around, talking about what she was looking at, and made Ace smile. A child's innocence and curiosity were refreshing things to see.

Eventually, the siblings arrived at a dead end which Sugar thought they'd have to go back home, but Ace went to the middle where the fallen leaves were, laid down on his back, and patted the spot next to him.

"What are you doing, Brother?"

"Relaxing. This is the place where I leave my worries behind and clear my mind, similar to meditation."

She looked at the ground, assessing where would be a nice spot, then dropped down on her back with a smile, lying above Ace so their heads could be close to each other.

"What do you do now?"

"Watch nature and let the serenity take me."

"Serenity?"

"Yeah. A state of calmness like when you're going to sleep. That requires being calm enough to go into a sleep state."

"So it could put me to sleep? I like the sound of it!"

She giggled before becoming silent. They could hear the birds chirping, deer prancing, the occasional bumblebee buzzing around, and trees rustling from the gentle breeze. Their hearing heightened the longer they stayed quiet, now there were sounds of grazing, birds landing on branches, and bugs flying by. For being so noisy, it carried a soothing effect as if nothing bad could happen.

Once thirty minutes passed, Sugar's eyes looked up at her brother, who had his eye closed and his hands behind his head. Was he asleep or just relaxing? Sure did look like he took a quick snooze.

"How did you find this spot?"

His eye opened into a sorrowful gaze, but since she didn't know, it didn't bother him much.

"Well, when I was new here, I didn't feel like I belonged here, I couldn't see anyone as family because I assumed they would be like my old one. There was a night I couldn't handle my memories and I ran as far as I could to be alone and pull myself together. That's when I found this little area and made it my secret relaxation place, and now I want you to use it when you need to."

She became puzzled and couldn't think of a reason for her to use it at all.

"But I'm doing fine."

"For right now. There's going to be days where you can't take it and need space. You'll understand it more once you mature a little more."

Sugar nodded and continued to stare up at the trees and their leaves, smiling again.

"Why don't we make it an activity just for us? I think it'll be great to have company if I want to be here."

"A secret area just for us does sound nice. I'd probably use the time to get you to know me more, too."

"How? I know a lot about you!"

That comment got a laugh out of Ace.

"You know the present me, not the me before I met our parents. Giving you those pieces of my history will explain a lot of things such as my fear of the water."

"Ooooooh. I've been wondering about that."

Ace paused for a moment as he tried to think about where he should start.

"I used to be in a rich family. I know it sounds nice, but it was miserable, like "I want them to disappear" kind of miserable. One of them was an older brother, and he hated my ideals and career choice with a passion. He hated it so much that he pushed me off his yacht and left me in monster infested waters while a storm was on top of us. I can't recall how long I was trying to stay alive for, all I remember were the waves taking me under and the aquatic beasts trying to make a meal out of me"

That wasn't the kind of history Sugar thought he'd have. She rolled onto her belly with a frown and a whimper.

"He left you to be eaten?"

"Yup, then acted like I slipped and fell off which nobody questioned except one. Even thinking about that makes my skin crawl."

"It's terrible."

She said before giving him a hug.

"If I had known, I wouldn't have made you give me swimming lessons."

A grin went across his face and his arm pulled her into a gentle hug.

"I wanted to teach my little sister how to swim, you didn't make me do anything, Sugar. Yes, it triggered me, but seeing you grow into a great swimmer was worth it."

The reassurance made Sugar less tense and guilty, then she nuzzled the side of his head as her silent way of thanking him. He took in the wholesome moment before he sat up and stretched.

"Well, you know a little more about me, now let's get back home. I have a feeling Baker's getting worried."

"Okay!"

Sugar got on her feet and skipped next to him, humming happily. While it was nice to see all the pretty colors, watch the animals, and unwind, spending time with and learning more about her brother was the best part. She looked up at him with a big grin.

"I love you!"

Ace looked down at her and gave her a grin of his own.

"I love you too, sis."