Chapter 22: The Meeting with the Bears

Branoc flew back to Catherine and Carlyle. “I have set up the meeting with the bears, as requested,” he said. “They were reluctant to meet with you. They don’t trust humans, as you know. But at the same time, they have heard that the wolves are now allied with you. So they respect you for having won the trust of the wolves.”

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They went down to meet the bears at the agreed time.

The bears were all sitting down and ready to meet. There were black bears, and brown bears, and big grizzly bears. All of them were bears of the mountain.

Catherine and Carlyle came. They were accompanied by a pack of wolves. And by 4 ravens--Branoc, Baldrick, Balsamer, and Bettina.

Carlyle saw all the bears, and was nervous. But Catherine just sat down calmly. Baldrick and Balsamer perched on Catherine’s shoulders. The wolves stood behind Catherine. Carlyle decided to follow Catherine’s example and sit down.

A big black bear spoke. “It is only because of our respect for Branoc, the elderly raven, that we have agreed to this meeting. But we do not wish to waste our time. Speak quickly.”

“We have two requests for you,” said Catherine. “Our first request is that you stop killing the humans who live on this mountain.”

The bears roared angrily. “And why should we agree to that?” asked the big black bear.

“Because all of the humans on this mountain are now under my protection,” said Catherine. “This mountain will become a safe place for the humans to live.”

“We hate the humans,” said another bear. “The humans steal from us.”

“If you promise not to harm the humans,” said Catherine, “I will make sure the humans do not steal from you.”

One of the bears, a fierce grizzly, growled. “These are the mountains. The laws of the forest do not apply here. We are free to eat who we like. And I love the taste of human flesh.”

“For a long time, the mountains were lawless,” said Carlyle. “But that time is over. We are now bringing the laws to the mountains.”

The grizzly stood up suddenly. It stood towering on two legs briefly, showing its full gigantic body. Then it crashed back down to four legs right in front of Carlyle and Catherine. It let out a deafening roar right in their faces. Baldrick, Balsamer and Bettina all instinctively flew up into the tree branches.. Of the ravens, only Branoc stayed next to Catherine. Carlyle was scared, but he tried not to show it. Catherine’s hands began to glow with yellow energy all by themselves. The wolves behind Catherine began growling and barking. The wolves crouched down, as if getting ready to pounce. The

grizzly could easily kill any one of the wolves, but it could not defeat the whole pack by itself.

Catherine held up her hand for silence, and the wolves immediately stopped barking, and sat down. Catherine's hand was still glowing yellow.

"We are bringing the laws to the mountains," Catherine said firmly. She forced herself to speak calmly, because she knew that to show fear would be to show weakness. "From now on, anyone who breaks the law will be our enemy." Catherine kept silent for a minute to let her words sink in. The bears looked at each other, unsure of what to do next. Was she challenging them?

"But," Catherine continued, "I do not want us to become enemies. We respect the bears greatly. And in fact, we want you as our friends."

"We are not your friends," one of the bears growled.

"That saddens me greatly," Catherine responded. She stood up. "I'm sorry to have wasted your time." She turned and started walking away. Carlyle stood up and quickly followed her.

"Is that it? Is that the end of the meeting?" one of the grizzly bears called out after her.

Catherine stopped briefly. "It is," she said. "We regret that you do not want to be our friends. We have informed you that you are not to harm any humans in the future. If you do harm any humans, you will incur our displeasure. I don't believe there is anything more to say at the moment. We have other matters to attend to. We need to fight the ogres next."

"You cannot fight the ogres," said another bear. "They are much too powerful for you humans."

"We can," said Catherine. "And we will win." She then turned and left. The ravens, the wolves, and Carlyle followed her.