

A/N: Throne of Glass and all its characters and awesomeness belong to Sarah J. Maas.

"You know how this is going to end," Connall said to his twin brother.

They crouched down behind a large cluster of bushes, waiting for their parents to come home. They hadn't seen Mother in over two months, and Father had been gone even longer. He commanded the Black Eagle regiment of the army, and rarely got to come home on leave.

Mother had spent three weeks out on patrol with the Fourth Company of the border guards, before going to make her annual report to the Queen. Fenrys had overheard her tell the housekeeper that Father would be coming home with her when she returned. Fenrys had promptly decided that the best way to welcome their parents home was to launch a sneak attack.

One of the household guards, doing a sweep with a spyglass, had spotted Father and Mother. So, the boys occupied themselves with lessons and snowball fights until late afternoon, and then chose a perfect spot for an ambush. A large cluster of bushes halfway between the stable and the house. They knew not to attack until the horses were put away.

"Mother is going to kill us," Connall continued. "Then find someone who can bring us back to life, so Father can kill us."

"Don't be such a baby," Fenrys said, eyes never leaving the road. "They'll think it's funny. Remember when Mother rigged that bucket of paint to fall on Father?"

"I remember her tanning our hides when we did the same to cousin Julianne. We didn't get supper. On our birthday." Connall jabbed his brother in the ribs.

Fenrys shoved him in retaliation. Connall yelped as he slipped on a patch of ice and fell. He got his feet under him and tackled his twin. They wrestled in the snow, scaring several birds away from nearby trees. Fenrys pinned Connall to the ground.

"If you're going to keep whining, go back to the house."

"Get off me!"

Fenrys let him up. The two boys glared at each other. The loud scolding of an angry squirrel in a tree distracted them.

"Bet you five lira I hit it," they said at the same time.

The two grinned at each other, argument forgotten. Each one pulled a small, smooth stone and a sling from their pockets.

"Three, two, one," Connall counted. Two stones arced through the air.

The squirrel bolted, and the stones hit the tree. Fenrys swore.

"Mother will wash your mouth with soap if she hears you say that," Connall warned.

"She says it. So does Father."

The sound of hoofbeats caught Connall's attention.

"Listen," he said. "They're coming."

The boys hid their slings and a few other odds and ends from their pockets in the pack that they'd put snacks in. Then they changed into wolf form. Their parents rode up to the stable, dismounted, and handed the horses off to two of the grooms. Father talked to the head groom for a few minutes. Finally, he and Mother headed towards the house. When they drew even with the twins' hiding place, they paused.

"You should start running now, boys," Father said. Both adults changed to their animal form.

The twins ran, heading for the house as fast as their four legs could take them. Fenrys pulled ahead of Connall, ever so slightly, as they reached the front door. Father pounced on

Fenrys and pinned him to the ground. Mother caught up with Connall, grabbing him by the scruff of the neck and shaking him. Both boys whined apologies.

Mother dropped Connall and changed back to her Fae form. "Shift," she ordered her sons.

They obeyed and looked up at their parents, trying to gauge how much trouble they were in.

"Not good decision-making on your part, boys," Father said, the barest hint of a growl lacing his deep voice.

Connall shifted from one foot to another, trying to think of a good excuse. Or any excuse.

"We wanted to show you our ambush techniques. We've been practicing," Fenrys said in his most innocent voice.

"We always learn better through experience," Connall added.

Father laughed. Mother, still straight-faced, smacked him on the arm.

"Clearly you need more practice," Mother said. "You made several mistakes. First, you should have stayed downwind of us, so we couldn't smell you. And you shouldn't have made plans when the servants were within hearing range."

Both adults were smiling now, which wasn't entirely a good thing, but at least they didn't seem to be mad.

"Most importantly," Father said, picking up the thread of the lecture, "you shouldn't have ambushed us at all. Since you have so much extra energy, you can spend it scrubbing pots in the kitchen, and mucking out stalls in the stable for the next two weeks."

"And during those two weeks, we'll be demonstrating some ambush techniques of our own," Mother finished.

"Since you two seem to learn better through experience. But for right now, go to your rooms."

"Yes, Mother," the twins chorused.

"We're doomed," Fenrys said once they were inside.

As they went up the stairs, Connall heard Mother laugh and say, "I told you they'd pick that bush."