

A small white-furred fialt kitten dropped from his perch in the trees. His fur was fluffy and thick with black and gray colors covering his hands and bare feet. He wore no adornments other than a kelp loincloth. He tumbled once in the air before his feet touched down lightly on the grass.

“I wasn’t afraid of her, you are who frightens me. How did you move so fast? I want to move that fast!” He touched the prone woman cautiously with an outstretched finger, and did not stop to catch a breath before continuing his barrage of questioning, “Why did you bring her here anyway? Is she in trouble? I bet you know lots of people in lots of trouble, huh?”

Raek was patting at the air and shaking his head through the whole verbal volley. “Easy Brinn, I am old and my tongue is not as fast as it once was,” he leaned over and poked the young Jier Fielamarr in his chest.

“Yah, you are pretty old. How many winters have you seen? I bet thousands huh? What about her? Has she seen more? She doesn’t look as old as you, but she’s human and it’s really hard to tell with them. I’ve only seen a few of them.” He stopped and cocked his head to one side as he leaned over sleeping Meliahn to put his face right in front of hers. He reached a hand up slowly, cautiously and was about to touch her puffy pink lips when Raek slapped at his hand.

“Ow!” Brinn snapped and leaped high into the air, the furry growth that would soon be a mane stuck out. When he landed, he was on all fours, the fur on the back of his spine was standing on end and his back was arched up. “What did you do that for?”

“Don’t touch, she is injured and... and the things in your fur could get her sicker,” Raek chastised.

“I clean myself!” Brinn scoffed.

Raek squatted and put both hands on the young fialt to hold him still more than to balance himself. “I have been with your Pride for some time now Brinn and I have asked your patriarch’s permission to begin teaching you. I have been watching you...”

“When? You watch me when I sleep? That’s just crazy...”

“No, I’ve been wa...” Raek began again.

“I’ve been watching you too; you act like you know a lot but you’re really scared too.” Brinn twitched his nose whiskers and crossed his thin arms.

Raek was at a loss for words. He stood and smiled; his broken tooth, sagging skin and flopping right ear made him look haggard indeed. “You will do nicely as a shaman I believe,” he started to turn away then stopped and looked down at the waist-high whelp. “Or I’ll kill you trying and then have to find another to fill your place.”

Brinn swallowed hard and looked up at him with large azure eyes. His vertical pupil slits grew wide, almost round at the threat. “You wouldn’t really...”

Raek just turned and walked towards the largest tree at the edge of the small clearing and squatted again. He motioned for Brinn to follow and the kitten did so, albeit cautiously. “I know that you have already learned to follow your heart and trade with nature,” Raek poked his thumb into Brinn’s chest. “You are very young to have already learned so much, and by accident!”

“I didn’t mean...”

“No,” Raek cut him off, “don’t speak, just listen.” He waited a few moments then smiled, “Before you perform any more rituals or sacraments, you must understand the risk and reward of each action you make. For you see, every splash you make in a puddle makes waves which...” Raek paused and shook his head. Attempting to begin anew he said, “To begin with, you must learn that all things in this world have roots...”

“Even puddles? If so would the splash be the root, or would the wave be the root? What about my foot, would that be the root? Why do things need roots? I don’t get it.”
Raek sighed, “Brinn... focus...”