

THEIR SECRET GAME

It was a cold, winter's day, and the forest was silent. The birds seemed to have their voices taken from them and the many brooks have ceased their babbling. A pair of amber eyes looked out at the vast landscape, through the tall oak trees. Another pair looked out in another direction, as if to watch for something dangerous.

The two figures jumped from the high branches, and landed gracefully on their leather-clad feet. Two men, both with similar brown hair, amber eyes, and an eerily similar smile on their chapped lips. The one on the right wore a wolf-skin coat, and the one on the left wore a leather one. The men walked stealthily, side by side, minding the many twigs that might snap under their heavy footfalls.

Let the game begin.

About a few yards away from where the men were, a lean, muscular boy-not quite a man-with golden hair and glittery blue eyes, accompanied by a cinnamon-haired girl, carrying a quiver full of sharpened arrows and a large bow. They moved swiftly from tree to tree, making as less noise as possible. The girl almost slipped-only to be steadied again by the man-boy.

The twin figures began to close in on the two-the eerie grins still on their faces- when the one on the right, suddenly jumped to the side. A very sharp spear hit a tree trunk, merely inches away from the other man's cheek. He heard a rustling sound in one of the trees and turned in its direction. He walked slowly toward it, until he was only two feet away. Then he struck in hard with his large fist, shaking the large tree.

A shrill yelp sounded through the forest, as a small girl fell out of the tree. Her brilliant, green eyes twinkled lightly when some of the sun's rays escaped through the trees. The man with the wolf-skin coat yanked her roughly by her small elbow; forcing out another yelp. "Ha, got you. Quick little devil you are, Risa." Risa looked up at him and scowled. Her green eyes sparkled with defiance. "The game ain't over yet, Luke." She spat.

Luke glanced over to the other man and signaled to him. When he reached him, he threw Risa into his chest. "You take care of her, John. You know how to handle women better than I do." Risa scoffed, as John started to take hold of her elbow. They dragged her along the forest-still keeping vigilant. She looked hopefully at the trees-hoping. 'Come on Max, we just can't lose this game. Where are you?' John jerked her arm and started pulling harder.

The golden-haired boy and the cinnamon haired girl made their way quickly across the forest. The boy stopped abruptly-pulling the girl to a stop. He pointed a finger to the clearing below, and smiled. A boy with red hair stood in the clearing, alone. He rested against a tree with his arms behind his head. He clearly did not care much for this game.

The girl smirked and started to ready an arrow. She crew the bow string with amazing ease, and let go elegantly. The arrow landed on the boy's collar-pinning him against the tree. He struggled-looking like he was having a seizure-against the arrow, obviously not aware that he could just pull it out. The pair jumped down from the tree, and strode across the clearing toward the still-struggling boy.

They stood in front of the boy, still smirking. The boy noticed them and stopped moving. "A-Ace...Dawn..." The boy choked out. Dawn stepped closer to him and placed her hand on the arrow. She removed it with one, fast pull. Dawn glanced at Ace, waiting for a signal. He stepped in front of the boy and smiled a pleasant smile. "It seems you lose...Max." Max's gaze hardened. He let out a cold chuckle, sending a chill down Dawn's spine.

Max looked directly into Ace's eyes. "It isn't over yet." Ace laughed-keeping the pleasant tone. "Whatever you say." He pulled him by his shoulder, then dragged him away, into the forest. 'Hopefully this will work, Risa.' He thought as he was pulled further into the forest.

Luke whistled quietly as he walked through the forest. Risa's mood darkened as she continued to listen to Luke's irritatingly joyful tune. John noticed this and sighed. "You're not a very good sport, are you?" Risa stuck her tongue out at him. "Shut up. I don't need to know your opinion about how I act." John sighed again. "You do know this was your choice, right?" She glared at him fiercely, giving him a silent message. 'Shut up or else...'

Max trudged along the forest trail, silently thinking about how to outsmart the pair. He thought the best way to go, was to provoke Dawn's deadly temper. But he didn't want a game to escalate into a beating. So they stayed silent, walking until the sky turned into a dark shade of crimson and orange. "It's getting late. We better wrap this up quickly." Dawn said. Ace shook his head. "Don't be too hasty. Remember, we have to win this." Dawn nodded, observing Max. Luke stepped in front of Ace and drew his sword. The long blade laid its point onto his chin.

"Let's settle this right now. It's getting pretty late." Ace stepped back and drew his own sword. "Let's." Luke yelled loudly as he started to run toward Ace. He tried to strike Ace's arms only to be blocked by his sword. Ace blocked all of Luke's swift, and hard blows barely by a second.

Risa stepped with all her might onto John's foot, causing him to yelp. The clanging of the sword, distracted Luke and Ace away from them. Max saw her and decided to do the same. He broke free from Dawn's grip and knocked her out. He dragged Dawn's limp body over to Risa, who'd already restrained John.

"Hey!" Shouted Risa. Ace and Luke's attention was caught by her loud voice. Their eyes widened considerably. The sun had completely set, leaving the sky a light shade of indigo. Max and Risa had already captured Dawn and John, without them noticing it. "Guess we win." She said triumphantly.

"Dinner's ready, kids!" A loud, shrill voice called out from afar. The six children dropped their wooden props and ran in the direction of the voice. Ace scratched the back of his head, while helping Dawn up. "Aw man. I can't believe you guys beat us." Risa smiled sweetly. "Well, I did pick the game, so 'course I'd win!" John sighed loudly. "No! Now we have to do you guys' chores for a week!" Max and Risa hi-fived and laughed at the others' depressed expressions.

Dawn's lips curled up into a satisfied smile, as they reached the large house. "Well, at least we had fun." The others smiled and nodded. "Yeah, there's always that." said Luke. Dawn glared at Max and hit him in the back of his head. "Ow! What was that for?!" Dawn crossed her arms over her chest and smirked. "For hitting me so hard, don't you know that hitting a girl is bad?" John laughed loudly. "You don't count as a girl!" Dawn hit him as well. "Ow" they all laughed as they entered the house.

A woman wearing a white apron looked over her shoulder. "Where were you kids today?" She asked, stirring the liquid in the pot. The children began to chuckle quietly. This game would be kept between them and only them forever. Plus they knew adults would only make fun of their make-believe tag, mixed with capture the flag. But instead of a flag, it's the players themselves.

They all stopped when they noticed her curious expression. "Oh, we pretty much ran around the forest all day. Nothing special..." Ace said. The woman didn't prod any further. The children all looked at each other and nodded. 'Let's play again tomorrow...'