

Kyle Biery

Pack's Trek

The growl of a stomach broke the repetitive crunching of the pack's steps. Yap gave the growl no attention as he looked over the land ahead. Everything ahead was devoid of life and the dull fog of a snowstorm reduced their vision to near blindness. Occasionally, a tree would appear but all of them were devoid of leaves.

"Fa," he heard his youngest squeak from her mother's jaws. "I'm hungry, Fa."

"I know, Geer," he said. "We all are."

"Food," she said with a soft whimper as she curled up more against the cold.

Yap's mate stopped and placed the pup down before giving her a nuzzle. The pup eagerly soaked in the warmth provided by her mother.

"Yi, we need to keep moving," Yap's voice was quiet, despite the howling winds that blew past them.

Yi glared at him as the rest of the pack stopped and gathered in a circle around the mother and the last of the pups. Her fangs had just started to poke out from behind her lips as she spoke.

"To where, Yap?"

"Anywhere but here," he replied.

"Why though? What's the point? All we are doing is delaying the inevitable," one of their packmates said, his eyes sweeping the wastelands. Fell was his name, as he had fallen often when he was very young. "There is little here but dust and echoes of our packmates. Their spirits have long since joined with the Great Cycle."

"I refuse to let us die in the dirt like so many of us did," Yap said, growling at the wolf.

Fell whined and backed away, sufficiently cowed for now.

The last elder hobbled toward Yap, his scarred and unseeing eye making his remaining eye glow brighter. “I know these lands well, Alpha,” the old wolf said, his voice beaten by age but no less powerful, “We will find nothing but ruin and death if we continue this way.”

Yap snarled as he turned back to his mate, who wound herself around their pup, already passed out in her mother’s fur. Looking at them both, their ribs were starting to poke out noticeably.

“What would you have me do then,” he asked the elder as he turned back to the old wolf.

The wolf considered him for a moment before nodding.

“I know of a cave a day’s walk from here,” the elder replied as he jerked his head towards the North, “There’s a spring within and there should be plenty of game taking shelter there,” he paused and grinned. “Plenty of rats for the taking. They should be nice and plump this time of year.”

“Rats?” Geer’s voice said, the pup having woken only a moment ago at the sound of her favorite food.

This made the other wolves huff a laugh at the young wolf’s enthusiasm, made even more apparent by her weakly wagging tail.

Yap huffed a weak laugh of his own before nodding at the elder. He stepped aside, allowing the old wolf to lead them onwards.

The pack continued on, their gait significantly faster with the hope of water and food.

Yap came to a trot beside the elder. “Why did you not mention this place before? We could have used it,” he questioned.

The old wolf merely huffed a quiet laugh. “Let us just say that you have proven to be above your own pride.” He glared at the wolf with his lone eye. “Before, you drove our pack onwards with little regards for your family, but now you realize what it is costing you. Your three pups before her have all perished in this winter and we’re the last.” Yap lowered his head. “If it’s any consolation,” Yap looked at the elder, who now sported a look of embarrassment, “I confess that I forgot about this place until we passed that rock a few minutes ago.”