

Serendipity in the Woods

“Loki! Astrid! Fetch some firewood, will ya? I will go hunt some game for our dinner, I’m utterly ravenous!” Their mother announced as she grabbed a bow and arrows, and slammed the moss-covered door shut.

The twins stared at each other and shook their heads of flaming ginger and fiery scarlet. “I don’t want to go.” Loki pouted. Always being the more responsible one, Astrid reprimanded, “Loki! Mother clearly instructed us to gather firewood, do you want to eat cold, bloody, raw meat?” “Okay, but one round of hide-and-seek!” Loki’s mischievous, daring look morphed into a pair of innocent pleading puppy eyes, “Please?” Loki always knew his sister had a soft spot for him. “Fine!” Astrid grumbled with a frown plastered on her face.

As the twins cautiously stepped out of the cosy cottage, the wind’s cold tentacles tightened their grip around them. A thick cloak of mist was draped over the seemingly treacherous forest. The tortuous, twisting trees stretched their arms out like witches’ gnarly fingers which would snatch any lost children off the path. The forest was going to devour them, leaving no bones behind. Loki stuttered uneasily, “We a-a-are brave and mighty Vikings, these silly trees won’t scare us. I’m going to hide, you can count to ten and come find me!” Before Astrid could complain, Loki had already vanished into the fog.

Astrid glanced around anxiously. It was so quiet, even her shallow breathing sounded deafening. The trees which once looked like witches’ fingers transformed into eerie distorted countenances with sneering eyes and leering snarls. The arms attached to the faces swayed in the wind, like

serpents flickering their forked tongues, dripping with deadly venom. She felt encircled by these towering demons. There was no escape from this suffocating prison, she was petrified.

“Astrid!” Loki’s familiar voice broke her out of her terrified trance. “Come o’er here! What on earth is this? Who piled all these twigs? Let’s collect some and head home.” “Whoever gathered them will be upset. This isn’t a good idea...” Loki climbed up the mountain of twigs like an agile monkey. “Nonsense, who would notice a few missing twi... What —?” A horrified shriek erupted as he tumbled down. “There’s a baby dragon hatching! This isn’t a pile of sticks, it’s a nest!”

Crack! Crunch! Clunk! Shards of turquoise shells flew through the air like whizzing arrows, narrowly missing their heads. Acting on her first instinct, Astrid scrambled off. Unaware of his sister's departure, Loki gingerly ascended towards the heart of the nest. From the heap of twigs and eggshells, a scaly navy-blue head slowly emerged. A wondrous gasp escaped Loki's mouth as the baby dragon tilted its head. The tiny adorable creature was covered with midnight-blue scales, while its swaying tail was lined with iridescent spikes. Shining sapphire eyes gawked at him curiously, as if trying to say ‘who are you?’ It was too much to take in and poor Loki did not know what to do. He froze. Astrid could not find Loki behind her so she hurried back just in time to see a frozen statue. “Snap out of it! We need to leave before something bad happens!”

A massive shadow loomed over the trees, shrouding the last streams of sunlight. In an instant, everything was pitch-black. A pair of blood-red slits lit up with rage like ferocious wildfires. Taking advantage of the darkness, the twins crept behind a log, hoping the bloodthirsty mother dragon could not detect their presence. At the worst time possible, the baby dragon cooed softly as it proudly waddled its way to their hiding spot. They were exposed.

"Run!" Loki screamed at the top of his lungs. Hand in hand, they fled for their lives. The dark forest was no help now. They slammed into trunk after trunk, slipped on root after root, and were scratched by thorn after thorn. Weary and panting, they stopped to catch their breath. This never-ending maze was like a cat-and-mouse chase, and they could never outrun the monstrous beast. It was a hopeless cause. Sobbing like a baby, Astrid sniffled, "We won't make it out alive! I love you Loki, even though you got us into this mess. I love you, Mom and Dad." They huddled together into a ball of snot and tears, awaiting the merciless wrath of the enraged monster.

A resounding, warning growl shook the ground. A magnificent royal purple dragon swooped down from out of nowhere, landing in front of the twins. It stretched its enormous wings, shielding them from harm's way. "Cool!" Loki exclaimed in awe. "We are still in one piece!"

Emerging from the darkness, the cobalt-blue mother dragon opened her cavernous mouth, unleashing relentless bolts of lightning. The violet dragon was unfazed, instead, it retaliated by spitting out columns of flames, striking down the lightning effortlessly. The battle of lightning and fire continued for what seemed like an eternity, illuminating the forests like bursts of fireworks. Mustering all her might, the purple dragon aimed her final blow - a ball of blue fire. Realizing her imminent defeat, the mother dragon plucked her baby up with her razor-sharp talons and escaped.

The bewildered children could not wrap their heads around what just happened. Who was this mysterious dragon? Why was it protecting them? Before their questions were answered, sparkles engulfed their protector, blinding their eyes. The silhouette shrank and shrank until it took the shape of a person. To their amazement, out came their mother!

The excited twins rushed into their mother's warm embrace. Loki blurted out, "Mom, are you a dragon?" "Does that mean we're dragons?" Astrid chirped. A knowing smile spread across their mother's face, "Yes, we are dragons. That's why we live in the woods and not in town. When you reach eighteen, you'll have the ability to turn into a dragon whenever you want. Children, it's late, let's go home."

Loki mused, "This is better than hide-and-seek. At least now, I know who we really are."