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Willowgreen's Day

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Elfquest, The Blood of Ten Chiefs -story

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"They're here! The hunters have returned!" A young elf-girl ran past Willowgreen while rushing to tell her mother. Willowgreen dropped her doings on the ground and rose. Finally the hunters had come back. Like all of the tribe she, too, had been waiting eagerly for them. At least for *one* of them.

"Two-Spear", she whispered, and a gentle smile curved on her face. *Him* she had been waiting for. Like always before, Two-Spear had led the Wolfrider hunters elsewhere, to other hunting grounds but this time he had been away longer than ever, at least she thought so. Or maybe it was just her anticipation of him.

She hurried to the direction where the girl had run from. Other elves emerged from their chores and walked along, some dashing past her, others trudging slowly behind her. The air was filled with intense sendings as family members, friends and lovemates or lifemates were all greeting each other at the same time. Willowgreen, however, did not send to her lifemate Two-Spear. She hoped to surprise him, and wanted much more to feel his arms around her than just feeling his thoughts in her mind.

The first of the hunters appeared from the glade path riding their mounts. Most of them were carrying large loads of meat. Three Wolfriders were even carrying a carcass of a buck. Abruptly one of them jumped of the back of his wolffriend and Willowgreen turned around to watch her run straight into the arms of her lover. She smiled sadly, and couldn't help but feel a little jealous; *if only Two-Spear would ever do such a thing.*

She spotted Two-Spear behind a group of Wolfriders just coming out of the wood. He was riding No-Name and talking to Graywolf who was walking by his side. Waving her hands Willowgreen darted towards him. Graywolf parted from his chief and walked away silently. Two-Spear saw Willowgreen running to him but remained expressionless, if not showing a hint of annoyance. He turned to speak to Graywolf who wasn't there any more but Willowgreen instead appeared to the other side of him and wrapped her hands around his waist pressing her head against him.

So surprised he was that he dropped the two spears he carried, those which he hardly ever left out his sight. He gaped at his lover leaning against him and walking along as No-Name hadn't bothered to stop.

"Two-Spear", she whispered his name again and again. "I have missed you, my love. You were gone so long". Two-Spear pulled No-Name's fur to make him stop. He stroked Willowgreen's golden hair and slowly and carefully moved down from No-Name's back. The wolf walked away, and Two-Spear and Willowgreen were together, leaning against each other, with the world and the Wolfriders around them disappearing rapidly.

Abruptly Two-Spear let go of her and stepped out of her reach to collect his spears. And the world was normal again with all the elves bustling around them. Willowgreen saw Talen approaching. Rellah and two other elders were following him. Willowgreen tried to reach for Two-Spear, to feel him against her again but Two-Spear was already gone to do the activities of a chief, talking with Talen over the matters of the tribe and listening to the complaints of the ever-complaining Rellah.

Willowgreen felt set aside. She followed quietly her lifemate as he went from one chieftain's business to another, once even trying to hold his hand but Two-Spear only growled and moved away. She didn't go away but stayed humbly by

Two-Spear's side.

As always, there was a feast at the evening to celebrate the return of the hunters. A deer was prepared; most of the Wolfriders ate the meat raw but a few and all the elders cooked their meal. At the end of the revelry dreamberries were shared and stories told.

When the hunters had heard of everything that had happened in the camp while they had been gone and the rest of the elves had learned of every incident that had happened to the hunters, the whole tribe finally started to move to their sleeping hollows and tents. Tired with their bellies full many fell asleep instantly but many were those love-, life- and soulmates, too, who celebrated their reunion in each other's arms and didn't sleep until in the morning, when the moons had gone well past their zenith.

So Willowgreen as well crawled into her and Two-Spear's shelter. After quarrels with Rellah and explanations from Talen and a final chat with Graywolf Two-Spear finally snuggled on the furs by her side. She turned over and nestled against him but he only turned his back on her repelling her kisses and caresses. Willowgreen sighed and let go of him.

Why, Two-Spear, why don't you let me touch you, she thought while staring upward absent-mindedly. *And what are you thinking now? I can only wonder. But things between us are much like they have always been.* Silent tears were falling on her cheeks. *I never understand you. Though, I often wonder, nor do you... yourself.*

Her silent lifemate seemed to be asleep so she turned to him to huddle against him at least now when he was asleep and could not hinder. But suddenly Two-Spear turned around. He seized her hands and asked her with expressionless face, "I Want you to come with me for a few days?"

"Come with you? Where?"

"Away from the Holt for a few days."

"But... But what do you mean? Why?"

"Will you come with me?" he asked harshly.

She stared at him. "I don't understand but of course I'll come with you, wherever you want. Whenever..."

He nodded his head and without saying another word turned away again. She gaped at him amazed. Finally she laid on her back and watched the stars aghast, still breathing hard.

Willowgreen stood aside when Two-Spear explained that he and Willowgreen were leaving the Holt for some days, and that meanwhile others should consider Graywolf and Talen their chiefs. The Wolfriders were just as confused as Willowgreen had been, and still was, and so Two-Spear tried to calm the clamour by saying that Willowgreen was in need of rare herbs and plants so they were going together to find those.

Of course it was a lie, and some of the Wolfriders understood it even before they observed that Willowgreen didn't have anything to gather the plants into nor looked like being prepared for that.

So Two-Spear and Willowgreen set off together with the wolf No-Name strolling somewhat behind them. Two-Spear strode silently forward carrying his two namesake spears and a skin filled with smoked meatstrips for him and especially for Willowgreen to eat if necessary.

"Where are you taking me, Two-Spear?" she asked with a tired voice.

"You'll see soon!"

"But is it far away? My feet are sore. I have to rest a while." She sat down on a tree trunk by the trail and started to rub her feet. Two-Spear watched her impatiently. "Not even half a day's travel and already you're too tired to continue. How can you be so feeble?"

She turned away and Two-Spear thought he could hear her sob. He stepped closer and sat by her side. "I'm sorry, Willowgreen", he said slowly, seemingly ashamed of his outburst. She raised her hands to cover her face. "It won't be long any more. You could ride on No-Name!"

He stood up smiling, pleased with his idea, and pulled Willowgreen up while at the same time sending to his grim wolffriend. No-Name paced slowly towards them as Willowgreen stared at him coming.

She was afraid of No-Name, just as she was afraid of all the wolves. Could her lifemate not remember this? She glanced at him. There was a gentle, almost unnoticeable smile on his face; she remembered that smile!

Even if her lifemate didn't remember how she feared the wolves, she *would not* remind him, because of that smile on his face, that mild, tender smile. No matter how it terrified her to climb to the back of the ferocious beast, she did it. She swung her leg on the other side and sat on his back, though swaying from one side to another but still holding balance.

No-Name was just as reluctant as Willowgreen, but obeyed Two-Spear's vigorous sending. Willowgreen was a bit too tall for No-Name even though he was one of the biggest wolves in the pack. Her feet dragged the ground so she exhausted herself keeping them up. Two-Spear was staring at Willowgreen when suddenly he seemed to remember the skin full of meat he was carrying. He opened the skin and offered her some strips of meat. Willowgreen ate eagerly and they set going again.

She couldn't help noticing that with every step Two-Spear walked he seemed to become more carefree, his paces were swift and light and, though the smile had gone from his face, the everyday frowning didn't show either. She wondered what had created the change.

Indeed, it wasn't a long way. Soon Two-Spear pointed at a small elevation behind a few trees in front of them, "There, Willowgreen, soon you'll see!" Willowgreen tried to make No-Name stop by first sending into his strange and confusing mind and then by pressing her legs against him. But No-Name hardly ever obeyed anyone except Two-Spear. Thus Two-Spear's potent sending was needed to stop him.

But when noticing Willowgreen's distressed look full of fear of No-Name, Two-Spear was suddenly startled as he realized that she had been riding on a *wolf*.

"Willowgreen, you... you were on No-Name?" He stared at her with his mouth open while pointing at the wolf. "But, I thought you couldn't... the wolves, I mean?".

Willowgreen watched his surprise understanding that just now he had remembered she couldn't stand wolves. *Two-Spear, what is the matter? You seem confused, as if you didn't know what to do. That is not like you; I can't remember ever seeing you uncertain, like this.*

She lifted her legs to get off of No-Name. Just then Two-Spear seemed to rise from his reverie and he stepped before her to help. Dropping his load on the ground he unexpectedly embraced his lifemate. Totally surprised Willowgreen wrapped her hands around him without saying one word.

I brought you here because..., it was difficult for him to continue. He paused for a while and tried again, **because I wanted to be away from the tribe... but still be with you**.

Willowgreen didn't answer but she could sense something fiercely joyous in his mind. With no warning, Two-Spear pulled her up to his arms. "Two-Spear, what...?" Willowgreen uttered in surprise. But she swiftly understood. A quiet giggle came from her lips when she winded her hands around his neck.

He carried her gently past the few trees and then lowered her on the green grass. At the base of the minor hillock, just a few arm spans lower than they were, Willowgreen could see a small shelter built under a giant oak.

"You made it? For us? But why?"

Two-Spear didn't answer. Willowgreen snuggled quietly against him. *I know there are things you don't talk about. So this must one of them, too. Is this only for you and me to be together, alone? Away from the worries of a chief? Oh, Two-Spear, now you are more of a mystery to me that ever.*

Two-Spear was staring forward. He was deep in his own thoughts, too. *Oh, Willowgreen, how difficult it is for me to say what I want. You hold me so sweetly and I can't even tell you that I brought you here just to do the same to you.*

He felt a sudden chill rise up his chest. It was the same that he had felt on that last hunting trip when he had sat alone after a meal leaning against a tree, observing how many of his tribemates huddled against each other, showing every sign of affection, and then sneaked silently away to some little hollow or a tent or elsewhere to continue. He couldn't count but he had a feeling that he had been away from Willowgreen for too long. He couldn't explain it but suddenly he had had a terrible hurry to get back to Holt.

But that was only part of it. The other part of him reminded him, every time he thought of his fair lifemate, that he was the chief of his people. And he couldn't reconcile between the two.

Together they walked down the slope but there was none of that lightness left in Two-Spear's steps. They were as hard as ever, and Willowgreen was as confused as before.

Two-Spear stretched out on the hay bedding of the shelter. Willowgreen crawled next to him. "I cannot explain it", Two-Spear started, "I wanted to be alone with you, and I wanted to be away from the Holt."

Willowgreen listened quietly. She lifted her hand on his chest but he pushed it away and continued. "Back at the Holt I am chief...", he said but didn't finish the sentence. Willowgreen, however, caught his unspoken thoughts from the air when he was trying to block them away.

She turned around, and lifting herself partly over him she whispered to his ear, "Yes, I understand, here there is no chief Two-Spear, just Two-Spear and Willowgreen". He frowned but didn't say a word, and Willowgreen knew she should not have said it. It was just as bad for someone else to say something that he hadn't said. Willowgreen sighed but then turned back.

No, Two-Spear, No! Do not turn away from me! We are alone, be what you are. Assertively she pulled him up against her and reached for his hair, and started to untie his chief's lock.

"Willowgreen, what are you doing?" Two-Spear bellowed and pushed her away from him. "...so you'll be chief even less", she replied fearfully to his sudden outburst.

"No, that cannot be changed! Never again do that!"

She lowered her head before his burning eyes. "Forgive me", she whispered and bent against him. He fell backward on the hay and she stretched herself on him letting her hair fall on his face, quickly moving her hands and fingers on his pale skin, in a desperate attempt to make him forget, doing everything so he would not stand up, walk away...

Two-Spear let her ample hair fall all over his face and neck. It smelled strongly of those herbs which Willowgreen sometimes used on healing or cooking or merely to bring the good aroma to their living shelters. Two-Spear deliberately pulled her hair on his nose to smell it. It was the scent of Willowgreen, the way he had always known her. It was familiar, it smelled of *home*.

He pulled her tighter against him.

Willowgreen pulled herself up. It was dusky. She glanced down at Two-Spear sleeping on the hay bedding. He was snoring.

Willowgreen sighed. It was as it had always been. She did not doubt that Two-Spear wouldn't have tried to be gentle. She knew and understood that it was his way, had always been.

And still... There had been something different, something she had not felt before, a thought from his lifemates mind while they had lain tangled together in each others embrace. It was only a weak feeling but she believed that had they not been here she never would have known it.

There was magic in this place. Not elfin magic, just the magic of them being here. This secure distant place was one they could share with each other.

Willowgreen lay down next to Two-Spear. She rested her arm on his back feeling his many scars, some from the last hunting trip, others from previous ones. Unlike a some others, Two-Spear had never asked Willowgreen to heal small wounds like them. She let her arm rest on his back and pressed her cheek on his shoulder. She breathed on his skin while scenting the smell of his torso.

Willowgreen knew that Two-Spear could recognize her from her body scents. She didn't have keen sense of smell though she was a Wolfrider. The wolf blood ran so narrow in her veins she sometimes wondered if she had any. The Wolfriders' ways were often mysterious to her. She remembered how Two-Spear had sometimes during their lovemaking tried to lick her face and neck like wolves do but she had not fancied it. He had not done so again. But the Wolfriders were an enigma to her, and the greatest mystery was their chief, her lifemate. Tonight maybe one small part of him had been revealed to her.

Now, nestling against Two-Spear, she felt good, relaxed and when she finally let go of her upsetting thoughts, sleep came quicker than she noticed.

Willowgreen woke up. The sun was shining brightly. Still half asleep she turned around and reached for Two-Spear, in vain. As usual, he had woken up and left. Willowgreen rose and saw Two-Spear sitting outside on a log, his back turned to her. She collected her clothes from the floor and clad herself.

"Bright morning, Two-Spear!"

He didn't turn but waved his hand lazily and growled something Willowgreen couldn't make out.

She walked to him and sat next to him watching him tightening the cord to make sure that his spearhead held in place. It was something he did quite often. Of course he had to for his life may any time depend on his two spears but they were also his namesake spears so he always wanted to take good care them.

When he had finished he silently put away his spears and turned to Willowgreen. Suddenly she stood up but instead of leaving she sat on Two-Spear's knee.

"I'm sorry, Two-Spear".

"What are you sorry for?" he asked surprised.

"That I could not have given you what you want".

Willowgreen wasn't sure if Two-Spear understood what she meant. He didn't answer, just looked at her.

"A cub, Two-Spear, a little daughter".

"That's not your fault", he answered shortly.

"But that's what you want".

"Yes", he whispered slowly. It was and had been his wish for a long time. She must have caught that thought from his mind last night. He wasn't sure if he should have been angry to her or not. If it had been any other secret, he surely would have inflamed at her but this was something special, something he would have wanted to tell her before but just hadn't. Now he was nearly happy that she knew. And a *daughter*, that's exactly how he had pictured the cub he wished for. How did she know?

He hugged her passionately and didn't want to let go. Willowgreen rose from his fierce embrace but she turned back to Two-Spear and pushed him down from the log so he landed on his back on the grass.

"What?" he exclaimed but didn't have time for anything more as Willowgreen nearly jumped over the log and fell on him. He only uttered a silent gasp as she lowered her head on his chest.

Really, Willowgreen? he sent in surprise.

Yes, Yes! she was nearly yelling through her sending.

Two-Spear tried to pull her against him but Willowgreen would not lie still. Instead, assertively she moved her fingers on his body to caress him in every way while her kisses wet his face and neck.

Two-Spear shifted and they rolled on the green grass. He ended on the top and everything Willowgreen had done to him he now tried to do to her. She wrapped her long legs around him and tickled his cheeks. And Two-Spear laughed. Willowgreen listened his joyous laughter and enjoyed every moment as his clumsy hands tried to tickle and caress her, as his fingers moved along her delicate skin and his lips along her neck and all over her face.

Once more they rolled over and Willowgreen ended again to Two-Spear's passionate embrace from which she drew apart only for a short moment to let her clothes fall off of her.

Two-Spear stood up from the ground. Willowgreen was sleeping on the short grass at his feet. The sun was still shining high though it was well past noon. He had fallen asleep promptly after their lovemaking.

He sat back on the grass and gazed at her. Naked, her arms and legs stretched on the ground, and infinitely beautiful, she was sleeping before his eyes. Two-Spear could hear her light breathing, and she had a smile of silent happiness and serenity on her face.

He reached for his clothes which had been tossed on the ground during the rapture of their joining. He pulled on his tunic and footwear but still couldn't leave and stared at the loveliness sleeping blissfully on the ground. Everywhere around him the world seemed just as green as his lifemate's beautiful willowgreen eyes.

Their joining... Never had it been like this. Never before had *Willowgreen* been like this. So assertive and active, full of will, *and life*. She had pushed him to the ground and showed him things they had never done before. She had tickled him and he had laughed, and she had giggled when she had seen him smiling.

He walked to her and gently pulled her up on his arms and carried her carefully to the bedding under their shelter. There he lowered her on the hay. But when he turned to leave she unexpectedly grabbed hold of him.

I'm perfectly awake! she sent laughing.

She pulled him back on the hay. "Willowgreen, I'm..." he started to say but she hushed him the best way she knew. And then he didn't any more try to say anything but wrapped his arms around her and let her hold him the way she wanted to.

Willowgreen pressed her naked body against his coarse clothing and began untying the strings of his tunic. Two-Spear assisted eagerly. She stretched herself on him; how tall she was. As tall as he, maybe even a bit more. Sometimes she wondered if her size was part of what made Two-Spear so uneasy. She was one of the tallest, if not *the* tallest, of the Wolfriders as she had so little wolf in her blood.

Fooled you, didn't I?

Two-Spear nodded slowly. Willowgreen stroked his back and recalled his many scars.

Oh, Two-Spear, may I heal the wounds on your skin?

Please, do so, he answered coyly, though not effortlessly.

Willowgreen spread her hands and fingers on his back and started healing. She penetrated his skin to find the broken tissue and began repairing it. The golden healing glow spread around and his scars started to disappear slowly. The dead part of his skin dropped away and Willowgreen slid over Two-Spear. She was exhausted and sweaty all over.

Two-Spear reached for his back to examine. It was as soft as a baby's skin. Willowgreen new that; she had given everything of herself to her healing. She couldn't say it to him though, no matter how much she wanted. She only lay in his arms and breathed hard.

She reached for his face and fondled his cheeks pondering a long time until she dared to ask, **Two-Spear, my sweet love, I want to give you my soulname. Would you give me yours?**

Though lifemated for a long time, they had not shared their soulnames. Willowgreen of course would have wanted to but Two-Spear had always refused. Once, when he had been severely hurt and Willowgreen had had to heal him, she had tried to search for his true name, but even in pain Two-Spear, at that time Swift-Spear, had held it from her.

The smile slowly disappeared from Two-Spear's face. He let go of her. Then she knew it was a mistake. She should not have asked for it; though she was ready, had been for an eternity, he was not.

They both stood up. Willowgreen feared that he would simply walk away. But Two-Spear calmed himself and said, "I was going to find something for us to eat. I'll go with No-Name, you can stay here."

He started to pull on his clothes and she helped him with his footwear. They both hugged each other so unexpectedly that neither was sure which had been first. So they parted in the feeling that both missed the other.

"I'll wait for you, my love", she said. Two-Spear called No-Name and collected his spears from the ground. After he had gone Willowgreen went to get her clothes from the grass where she had thrown them in the ecstasy of their joining. She clad herself and sat on the trunk.

I'm sorry, Two-Spear, for what I did. When you come back, I won't ask again until I'm sure you want too. Or I'll let you ask. Or whatever you want, my love...

She glanced around her. There certainly was magic in this place. She let herself fall on the other side of the log giggling and laughing aloud as she imagined Two-Spear still being with her, joined to her, to the very last.

How she loved him! She loved him more than anything, more than the bright blue sky or the hot shining sun, more than the coming day. And she would show him, show him everything. They were together here, nothing but the two of them. Now everything was possible, she would make everything possible.

Stop here, Two-Spear commanded No-Name and pulled his fur. He jumped off and leaned against the black wolf. Touching his spears he stared to the ground and recalled and pondered over his lifemate Willowgreen.

"Willowgreen", he whispered and bent back his head to see the clear sky. She had said to him things they had never conversed about. *The cub*! She knew of it now. *His secret longing*. His little daughter, looking just like her: pale, tall, with long golden hair and her green eyes; beautiful in every way, exactly like Willowgreen. A dream! Such a cub he would lift up in the air with proudness and happiness.

He fell on the ground. And his Willowgreen now shared his wonderful and painful secret. Their mating had been fruitless so far but he had never given up the hope of a cub. They had hardly ever discussed about it, like they hardly ever discussed about anything. His secret desire was something which was a sign of his weakness, and chiefs didn't have weaknesses. Their people had, and it was acceptable, but they had to set themselves apart from them to better look after them. It was his duty to be strong so everyone could trust him. It was his duty to be firm so everyone would have someone against whom to lean.

And yet, somehow he felt happy now that his beloved lifemate knew about it. Somehow he felt less burdened, his heart was lightened. He sighed and dreamt of her, her healer's hands wrapped around him, healing and softening his hard skin. It had felt wonderful, still did. And then she had asked for his true name.

His *name*... His thoughts hardened; why did she have to say that! Why did she have to ruin everything, the moment of their bliss! Two-Spear leaned against his second spear and got lost in his thoughts.

He stood there silently. No-Name slowly walked around him wondering what his elffriend was doing. The large wolf laid down, thinking what was the matter with his chief. Two-Spear had been acting strangely since their homecoming but this was really odd. But it was not No-Name's way to question things; he merely observed them and memorized them; perhaps for later use for he was an exceptional wolf, Two-Spear's wolffriend by his own choice and very elfin in some ways.

What had she done?
To share her true name with him. To give herself to him. To give *everything* of herself. That was what she had tried to do! Now he realized it. *And I called her feeble, I called her coward, I angered at her. I have called her things she is not! She is strong, my Willowgreen.* He stood erect and smiled gently, and felt a small tear in the corner of his eye. *She is strong, my Willowgreen.*
His Willowgreen was with him, waiting for him at the clearing. And suddenly he was in a hurry to get to her. He was hungry, she must have been too. He'd do what he did best: hunt, get her and himself something to eat. He'd return to her as soon as he could, *he'd return to her arms.*
As for his name... He knew everything was not so easy as it had seemed to him for a passing moment. There was still much more. He was *chief*! That thought burned him inside. His responsibilities... and everything. But he believed that these two things could now be made to fit with each other, that he could reconcile himself to both of them, that *all* could be possible.
He jumped to No-Name's back without forewarning and held his spears to his name and honour as the wolf and its rider disappeared to the thickening forest to find a meal.

When Two-Spear and No-Name were returning with prey it was the giant wolf who first noticed a new smell and sent to Two-Spear. Thought his wolffriend's sendings were dark and obscure as always, Two-Spear understood immediately what the wolf was telling him. He sniffed the air and sensed a weak smell which made hair rise in his nape. It was a familiar feeling which he had known before.
That smell was burdened with the idea of violence and fury, and the thought of bloodshed was the first to come to his mind. The stench belonged to humans, invaders of the elves' forest; the cursed humans, whom Two-Spear had once driven away!
He hastened No-Name into a rush and threw away the rabbit which he had caught. Ascending the little hill he saw the sight he had feared so much: humans, a small group of them, and Willowgreen was at the other side of the clearing, terrified, staring at them in horror. Only now he noticed her sendings; he had been too scared himself while riding to hear them pounding in his head.
Two-Spear, Two-Spear, where are you? Can you hear me? Humans! Humans here!
Two-Spear stared at the humans in confusion. He wasn't sure what they were doing: some seemed to be as terrified as Willowgreen and some seemed like arguing what to do.
Keep away, Willowgreen! Two-Spear sent and dashed down the hill riding the equally enraged No-Name. The humans were too shocked to even move when Two-Spear appeared like a sudden thunderstorm. He jumped off No-Name and threw his other spear towards one of the humans. Before the man even understood what was happening the spear struck into his stomach. He uttered muddled voices and collapsed to the ground.
Two-Spear glanced around. Added to the man bawling on the ground there were two other men, one female and a boy cub hiding behind her. No-Name had knocked the other man to the ground and was jumping around and over him seeking a chance to tear his throat open with his fangs.
Two-Spear didn't have any more time to think or consider. He acted by his keen animal instincts. The humans were no longer his enemies, they were merely prey to be hunted down and killed. When seeing the woman and the cub running away he threw his other spear toward her. It struck deep to her elbow and she fell. Two-Spear did not bother to see what the boy was doing.
His nostrils filled with the thick smell of blood and he turned around; one of his preys was no longer shocked but attacking at him. He jumped out of his way and to the dying man still holding his other spear in his stomach. Kicking him to the ground he clutched his other spear, the *manhunting* spear, and pointed it towards the human who couldn't stop but ran straight to it. The man's weight pushed the spear inside him as he fell to the ground on his face; Two-Spear only just managed to jump out of his path.
The fight had happened in a moment. But he felt strange not having a single wound. Who were these humans, too scared of him even to fight, or even *properly* run away.
Having seen that No-Name had finished his kill Two-Spear hurried to Willowgreen who was still gaping at the sight which now only consisted of corpses and an elf and his wolffriend covered in their enemies blood.
"Is everything all right, Willowgreen? They didn't...?"
"No, they didn't hurt me". She collapsed at his bloodstained hands. "They just appeared... I didn't notice, and then I was too scared to run..."

He stroked her hair a few times but pulled his hand back when realizing he was only making a bloodstained mess of it. He helped her down on the ground to rest against a tree.

"Thank you," Willowgreen murmured, still breathing hard.

"Cursed humans!" Two-Spear hissed. He went to the dead body of the human and pulled off his spear. Suddenly there was a screaming voice coming from the forest. He remembered the young boy. The cub must have run away while he had been killing his parents, he supposed. The spear in his left hand he ran to the forest sniffing the air.

Hiding behind a tree in a small hollow he saw the human cub, writhing in pain, holding his other leg. A venomous snake was wriggling away. Two-Spear froze. He stared forward and wasn't sure of what he saw. On a hunt he wouldn't have hesitated to kill a wounded animal, one which couldn't survive anyway. But *somehow* this was different, and he didn't know what to do.

The boy had noticed him and tried to stand up but the poison was burning in the wound and he collapsed down and tried to crawl away.

Willowgreen, can you... help him, Two-Spear sent and gave her an image of what he saw.

Help? she answered and tried to stand up but fell back to the ground. **Help how?** Her sending was a chaos and confusion as she didn't understand what her lifemate actually had meant, until it was too late.

Two-Spear closed his mind from her fearful sendings. With a few jumps Two-Spear leapt before the crawling boy. He clutched the cub's other arm and turned him around. With one swift move he pushed his spear through his heart.

The child lay dead on the ground with a face full of terror and panic, much less pain. Disgusted Two-Spear turned his body around and walked slowly away. Willowgreen hurried to him.

Two-Spear, what happened?

"Just the last of them," he answered quietly and pushed her out of his way.

She walked alone to the carcass and stared at it for a while. Having felt the surge of regret from Two-Spear's thoughts she now *knew* what had happened. Could she have done something? Had she been faster, had her thoughts been clearer, would she have been able to prevent this? Had Two-Spear genuinely wanted to save the child, she puzzled when walking away.

Coming back to the clearing she saw Two-Spear gathering together their few scattered things and arranging the place so that their being there couldn't be noticed easily.

We must leave right away! There might be more humans.

Of course, that was only part of the truth, as she knew well. She approached him and tried to pull him against her with her weak, yet somehow strong, long hands. **Let us stay for a while. Can you not feel the magic here?**

Her head resting against his shoulder Two-Spear asked amazed, **What *magic*?**

Our magic, beloved, *ours*!

He let her rest against himself for awhile.

But Two-Spear's mind was occupied by other thoughts now. Willowgreen pulled apart knowing she couldn't do more. It was as it had always been. They set on the way homewards, back to the Holt.

Halfway they stopped for a while to eat what Two-Spear had stalked. Having lain down Willowgreen tried to turn to Two-Spear one time more. But even when loosening the strings of her clothes his thoughts were elsewhere, distant as the stars, the humans he was thinking of. Suddenly he stood up, all too familiarly to Willowgreen, leaving her down he walked away. And then Willowgreen's thoughts were away too, on a green forest glade they were, on pleasures briefly had, on enduring hopes, hopes of change, and that which is tomorrow.