

Chapter 6

Returning the Favor

The wolf howled in pain as blood spewed from the newly received wound. Cassandra staggered in the flashing darkness, losing focus and almost succumbing to the strength of the hurricane's force. She shook her head quickly to clear her senses. Ignoring the pain in her side, she peered through the bludgeoning rains to find the source of her discomfort. Her eyes rested on the older gentleman who had stopped by her cabana earlier. He was holding what appeared to be a makeshift spear from things at her camp. The world went red as Cassandra's mind succumbed to the primal force that she fought to suppress. She lost consciousness as the beast within her clawed its way to the surface.

The werewolf let out a nasty, guttural growl that twisted Harold's stomach in six different ways.

"Be careful, Harold!" Bonnie yelled to her stoic husband, as she helped Allie limp to an unconscious Hunny.

"I will, BonBon! You just get those girls to safety!" Harold instructed his wife one final time. Fear began to take control of his mind, and panic began to infect his will. Harold simply took a deep breath and stared down the tip of his weapon at his adversary.

This wasn't the first time Harold had stared down the barrel of Death's revolver. As he eyed the unnatural beast that would be the instrument of his death, Harold instantly recalled a hunt that he had orchestrated for his friends. His wealthy, prominent, old-fashioned friends that he didn't like very much.

He had taken them to a valley in east Africa to hunt large prey. The illegal kind of prey. He had heard from a friend of a friend that the preserve in that particular area yielded strong, healthy game. The lands weren't exactly open to every hunter, so Harold paid some men to sneak them into the territory. The nefarious sort. They had smuggled his band of avid hunters into the preserve and led them to the edge of a patch of land that belonged to a vicious pride of lions.

He remembered the thrill of seeing the lion tear across the plains to demolish him where he stood. Harold stared down the barrel of his shotgun, the lion's fierce mane billowing majestically as it sprinted for its kill. He could take the shot whenever he wanted, the kill was already confirmed. Harold held steady, his focus unshakeable. He heard the group he was with shouting for him to take the shot from their hideout, their words laced with subtle fear.

"Easy men," he called to his friends, not taking his eye from the attacker, "I've got this."

He felt his pants tighten as he began to stiffen. This beast was a powerhouse of muscle and sinews, strength pronounced in every flex. This mighty brute, ruler of the East African plains, was barreling towards him with teeth and ambition bared.

Harold, a man of less than average strength, stood in opposition. He stood deadlocked in battle with this titanic feline, failing to compare to the beast in every way... but still held all the power. That's what thrilled the man. Power, and the pursuit of it. Money held sway over many aspects of life and was its own form of power. The real power, however, that sat within every man on the planet, outweighed any thrills money could provide. The real power, that man had crafted in the image of what made them superior, rested firmly in his grip with its business end pointing at the self-proclaimed monarch. Harold fired the gun with the confidence of a man who couldn't fail and felled the beast that had laid claim to his life. The attacking animal toppled across the ground lifelessly, fumbling head over heel from the momentum it had generated. It slid to a stop at Harold's feet, stopping a millimeter before it reached his boot.

He remembered the surprise on his accountant's face when he returned from the trip with the sexual vigor of a man half his age. Harold thought back sullenly as he recalled scheduling that particular trip with no consideration for the anniversary of his marriage. He recalled the fight he had with a grief-stricken Bonnie as he refused to cancel the excursion. He ended the life of an innocent animal, whose home he had invaded, while on a trip that caused rifts in his already suffering marriage.

Harold's eyes made their way to his makeshift weapon as the booming thunder ended his trip down memory lane. His eyes filled with tears as he realized the poetry in his impending demise. He tightened his grip on his spear, which was already showing signs of unreliability, as the wolf pounced at him. The man barely evaded the quick attack, as he stiffly rolled to the right of the beast. He picked up a palm-sized rock and hurled it at the towering monstrosity as it lunged at him once more. He caught Cassandra in the eye with the stone, producing an ear-splitting howl of pain. Harold, ignoring the pain to seize his chance jumped to the side of the beast and began stabbing it ferociously with the spear, intending to do as much damage as possible. His heart raced with the efficiency of a man past his prime. His joints and bones screamed at him in agony as the unlikely hero pushed past his age-stricken limits. The tent spike that he had quickly tied to his pole had gotten stuck inside the wolf by the fifth stab, but Harold stood his ground and continued to drive the broken stick into the side of the werewolf. His hand bled as the friction ate away at the skin of his palms.

The lightning roared around them as the wolf screamed in agony, as if it could feel every sensation the canine was enduring. The enormous mutt thrashed its head hard, hitting the interloper in the chest. Once he lost his footing, the wolf kicked the man with its hind leg, knocking Harold away in defiance.

The man tumbled across the ground as his wife watched, horrified at how the events were unfolding.

Harold stood weakly, fighting to get to his feet. He faced his wife, standing as tall as he could, trying to hide the wobble in his legs. The wind seemed to quiet, and the rains seemed to quell as the two locked eyes. Harold smiled lovingly at his spouse, who stared at him sorrowfully in return, tears pouring from her eyes. She watched him mouth the words *I love you* but had no time to relish them, or even return the sentiment. Mere seconds after Harold had completed his final declaration, the wolf pounced on him, clenching down on his torso until its snout reached his navel.

The women heard the snap of Harold's bones, over the piercing thunder, as they gave way to the force of Cassandra's untamed fury. The light in his eyes turned off instantly as his body attempted to fight in protest. The wolf then lashed her head so hard that Harold's torso went flying into the jungle as his legs fell to the ground, still twitching from an unsuccessful escape attempt.

Bonnie screamed as she watched the fiendish hound rend her beloved in two, shifting the devil dog's gaze to its next victim.

"Get out of here," Allie moaned quietly, barely conscious.

"You hush now," Bonnie said as she stood to her feet. "Everything is going to be ok. Don't you worry," she lied through her tears. The older woman stood in front of the bloody duo, raising her hands and putting her arms out to her sides. She knew she was a poor barrier, and Bonnie knew that she wouldn't last more than 10 seconds against their charred foe. She also knew that leaving these girls defenseless was wrong.

“Thank you,” she yelled to the girls over her shoulder. She could never have imagined how much their brief acquaintance would change the course of her marriage. She was grateful beyond words, even if they had no clue what she was thanking them for. She turned her attention back to the singed beast as it raced toward them, barking vehemently as foam and saliva escaped its jaws.

Allie whimpered quietly as she lay next to her comatose partner. The rain pelted her mangled body, sending pain rushing throughout her being with each drop. The sound of her pitiful cry barely registered on the sound spectrum and was utterly crushed by the insanity that continued to ensue around them. Her plea for help did not fall on deaf ears, however.

A sleeping Hunny instantly opened her eyes, her body responding to the beck and call of the only person she had left in her life. Her eyes were gone, replaced by white energy that seemed to swirl and flow to an unseen current. Electric energy began to gather around her body, concentrating around the black-veined arms that she now sported. She rose into the air as if possessed or carried by some unseen force. Allie watched in dread, losing consciousness as fast as she was losing hope. Her friend was floating through the obliterating winds that pulled at them, but her body was slumped as if no one was inside. Her head was tilted to the side, mouth slightly parted, and filled with white energy as well. She wasn't responding to any outside stimuli, and Allie wasn't even sure the woman was breathing.

Hunny's body fired the raw energy at the werewolf, blasting it across the shore until it landed in the center of the water. The two spectators continued to watch as Hunny floated towards the pool of water, determined to eliminate the threat. Allie and Bonnie watched as she raised her hands and clenched her fists as if reaching within the raging tempest itself. Her arms were moving as the rest of her body continued to slouch in midair, her face almost trancelike. The electrical energy seemed to marionette her actions, Hunny's will to defend her friends on full display despite her mind being elsewhere. The heavens rumbled as the flashing in the clouds intensified.

The celestial dancer had stopped her tease in awe of the pure power gathering around her. The bolts of lightning raged and flashed across the surface of the clouds, gathering around the newly empowered being. She threw her hands down with great force, causing dozens of bolts of lightning to converge on the watery trap that held their furred enemy. Cassandra's head reached the surface, and she howled in misery as the electrified water attempted to rob her of what little life force she had left. The barrage ended a few seconds after it had begun, leaving a charged sensation lingering in the air.

Cassandra's naked body floated to the top of the pond in human form, the severity of Hunny's attack on full display. Harold's dagger could now be seen poking through the torso of the werewolf's condensed body. She wheezed weakly as she looked at the woman whose taste had intrigued every sense she had.

Hunny's body raised its hands again, ready to deal out a second round of punishment and end the crispy Latina's life.

The skies rumbled, and the energy gathered, only to dissipate as the pond's entire supply of water shot into the sky. The water sent Hunny and Cassandra both flying into the wind as it formed into a vicious waterspout. The spectators watched in astonishment as the spiraling column of water drilled into the sky and joined with the clouds. The occurrence did not behave as a tornado made of water normally would. It simply danced within the confines of the pond. The top of the vortex was the width of the pond, the same as the base, with a skinny middle that swiveled comically as its winds built in speed.

Allie watched as arms of water extended from the funnel's body, but they didn't seem to spin with the rest of the formation. The arms acted independently, reaching in different directions, making their way to everyone in the area. The first arm wrapped itself around Hunny's waist, pulling her from the circumventing winds that carried her, dragging her into the funnel. Cassandra's seared body was recovered from the jungle. The spout's tentacle was wrapped around an ankle and was pulled into the waterspout as her damaged body dangled almost lifelessly upside down.

As she fought to maintain consciousness amid the unforeseeably supernatural chaos, Allie saw two tendrils pulling more guests into the ravenous cyclone.

Allie and Bonnie were the last to go.

Bonnie screamed in terror as her face twisted in an exasperated confusion.

Allie was too weak to fight it, and too tired to try. She succumbed, without protest, to the will of the powerful force as it pulled them all inside its body. Lights and lightning danced within the liquid column as the true Island Magic revealed itself. The ground rumbled in triumph as the water stopped swirling and returned to its resting place with a violent slam. Crashing waves splashed against the edges of the body of water as the storm started to dissipate. The sky began to clear, revealing a sun rising over the horizon. The tempestuous waves in the pond became nothing more than frothy ripples as the weather became calm and pristine. The dawn of morning radiated a clear vibrant sky, not a storm cloud in sight, that insisted nothing supernatural had occurred. The shore of the pond told another story, as it was littered with nature's debris and the gear that had surrounded the campsite.

The first thing that Hunny noticed, as she slowly regained consciousness, was the sweltering heat. It was so hot and arid that it dried out her nose, making breathing painful. She felt the light of the sun beating down upon her from an open window. Annoyed that someone had chosen to forego the air conditioning, Hunny attempted to get up to close it. Her eyelids refused to open as the pain from moving dominated her senses.

"Easy," she heard a man say in a heavy accent she couldn't place. "You've been asleep for two weeks, and still have a lot of healing to do. Please, can you tell me? What is the last thing you remember?"