

The breeze was chilly at that time of the night in the woods of the South Republic of Amazonas, which was weird, because it was usually scorching hot even in the winter, at least that was what the traxians had heard about this place. So the group of traxian friends decided to look for sticks and make a bonfire so they could get warmed up. James helped them since using his power to control the four elements of nature.

From a certain distance, the older girl, Marie, could see the orange fluorescent silhouette of the Anhangatá — a fire spirit that they've met earlier that day, he was smaller than her, maybe 4'9, emanated fire from his tiny body, and his toes...were odd to say at least, they were backwards but he could walk normally — spying on the happy group like he was reluctant to say something. So she told him to come closer and say what he wanted, this gave him enough courage to sit with them around the fire, so he could tell a story about another supernatural being that lived in a particular area of the woods, near a river, but only showed himself at night, when the moon was at its highest point.

"You cannot see his eyes or his face until you're trapped in his dreams. Oh yeah, the dreams..." His voice was no more than a whisper. "He makes you hallucinate you're in your worst nightmare over and over. Honestly, I've seen people pissing on themselves after facing him. Then they would die, either from scratching themselves by the panic or the creature itself would suck all of the energy of the person before they could do that." He made a pause as if he had nightmares with the scenes he described and his fire shined even brighter. "Otherwise..."

"Otherwise what?" Logan rushed to ask the creature.

"You wouldn't like to know" He said as every of the teenagers echoed genuine disappointment. "No, I'm serious. If I were you guys, I would go to sleep as fast as I could and stay away from the river. Look at the moon." They all raised their heads. "It's almost time. Well... You know what they say: forewarned is forearmed. Plus, you know... losing royal blood from Traxis in our territory won't make a good impression of SRA" He blinked at Marie, the heir.

As that was said, the spirit vanished, but the murmuring started among the friends. Marie, knowing that going to the river would just bring her trouble, decided to stay in the camp.

"Do *not* go to the lake, ok? I swear to our father's blood, if I see that you're going there I'm gonna beat all of your asses." She warned them before quickly got into her bedroom, getting away from their siblings' sight.

The four of the remaining siblings pretended to follow their sister's advice, but as soon as she fell asleep, they were already in the woods with Ariel and Logan.

"Do you guys think we can kill that creature?" The second brother, Peter, asked sincerely, from Lauren's side.

"Sure, we're six and he is just one. There's no way he can win all of us." The fourth, Lauren, replied with no doubt on her tone.

"You're so sure we can win, but what's the plan?" The younger brother, Luke, asked. When no one answered, he sighed.

"You're the brain of the group, I thought you had a plan" Logan blurted out.

"Actually, he is the brain in situations like that." Luke pointed to James.

"Let's just try not to look at the creature's face" James said calmly as always.

James didn't say the real reason he came with his siblings, but the truth was that he knew they were in extreme danger by going to the river, and at least wanted to help them get out of there when things got out of handle. He was *sure* things would get out of handle and

would easily trade his life for any of his siblings if that was what it was needed. Some people would even say he was like a hero for doing so, but he disagreed, he was just making sure his family would be alive.

As for Ariel, she was there, because she wanted to remember what it was like to befriends with that weird group, since she and Lauren got into a quarrel and their friendship broke a long time ago they hadn't talked properly. Ariel really missed those days, so she wanted to enjoy that trip the most she could. Then, she would come back to the cold and distance presence of her mother.

As the friends came a little bit closer to the river, James heard a *crack*, as if a stick had been broken. He surveyed their steps and saw nothing. But as he fixed his gaze at his right there it was. *A broken stick*. But he stayed silent, he knew that saying what he had seen would just bring more fear to everyone, he could smell it. He had to stay calm for his family sake.

"Are you sure you still want to go to the lake?" Ariel murmured. "That creature seems pretty dangerous from what the small guy said."

"So what? We have the Goddess of Life on our side." Lauren murmured back. "Afraid, *Ferri*?" She said sarcastically.

"You wish, *Moore*." The other responded annoyed. And looked away from Lauen's gaze.

The group of friends arrived at the lake. And as they stopped in front of it, the wind started to blow harder like a warning that something in that place was odd. *It was at that moment that they had a silent agreement that they were sure they couldn't kill the creature regardless of their power or fighting skills.*

They all looked back and saw a shadow coming from the woods and screamed in terror. James stood in front of them in an attack position as a natural move to protect his siblings of whatever that creature was. But quickly his sister joined him as she drew her sword and remained alert. As she did that, all of them also drew their swords and prepared their powers for combat.

It all happened really quick, but James saw everything in slow motion. Peter's eyes had widened harder than he thought it was possible, then his hands were in his knees and he was screaming louder than a *banshee* and they all covered their ears, because it seemed like the sound came from hell itself. At that point, all of them had tears in their eyes, this couldn't be happening with the same happy guy that helped anyone that asked, the guy that was part of the literature club of the school.

Logan took a step farther to the location that they saw the shadow as Luke shouted to him not to go. The next thing they heard was his sobbs and he fell to his knees patting something that only he could see on the ground. One of the best soccer players was not strong enough to resist the creature.

"I can't believe it." Luke was trembling by the scene of his brother and his best friend living their worst nightmare over and over and over.

Although he was scared, he wouldn't back up. He was the prince of Corium and he would fight with all his strength. Then the creature was in front of him, like it teletransported from the woods to near the lake.

James was frozen for all this time. He couldn't move his legs. Then he did the only thing he promised himself not to do. He started crying in *terror*. In terror because he couldn't save his siblings. He saw the creature grab his brother by the neck and look directly at him, he started to

twitch. Lauren tried to cut its arm off, but the sword passed through the creature's dark robe and his brother finally froze, there were silent tears through all his face.

Then the monster was almost with his face directed to Lauren when Ariel sent a bolt of electricity in the monster's direction and it looked back to her. It raised its arm and she widened her eyes whispering "not here again." over and over as she grabbed her short hair desperately.

"You idiot!" Lauren hissed at her direction and rushed to Ariel's side.

But as Lauren had reached her shoulder, she saw its face and tightened that touch. And she closed her eyes, a tear falling from it, at the same time that clenched her jaw. It was almost like she was trying to hold herself on the real reality by anchoring herself to Ariel. But she *did* see the creature's face, it was... faceless, it was all just a dark smoke. Though she could see the face of all the people she had ever feared. The sound she heard as soon as she was trapped was the scream of a lot of voices asking for help. It was agonizing.

And there was James, still frozen. Now he was sobbing, because they were all trapped and *he had no idea of what to do*.

He blinked for a moment and they just disappeared. The monster, his siblings, Logan, Ariel... they were all gone. As if they were never there.

Then he thought *he* was the one trapped in the nightmare. It *had* to be. He wouldn't just freeze in a situation like this when his siblings were in extreme danger..., would he? . He just hoped that being trapped gave the rest of the group time to run from that creature.

He would continue to think that, if he had not seen the unmistakable sword with the black diamond in the pommel and the various onyxes adorning the grip from Lauren. He grabbed it and it was still warm. No, *he didn't see the creature's face*.