



TROLLHEIM

- The Witch of the Water Spirit's Marsh

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Book eight in the TROLLHEIM – series
First three chapters translated to English

Chapter 1

The Mysterious Crow

Adam stopped and turned around.

Zira had halted first. Now she stood staring up into the air. They were in the forest, on their way home from school,

“What is it?” he asked.

“That is not a crow.”

Adam followed her gaze and saw a lone crow perched at the top of a pine tree.

“Looks like a crow to me,” he said.

It cawed.



"Sounds like a crow too."

Zira shook her head.

"Don't let it fool you." She took a step toward the pine, and the crow lifted off, flew away, and vanished behind the trees.

"Was it a spy?" asked Adam. "From Helheim?"

"Loki can use crows as spies," she said. "But then they're still just crows. That one was different."

"Different how?"

"It was thinking... like a human."

"Seriously?" said Adam. "What was it thinking about?"

"About how to kill us."

"Huh! You're joking?" Adam stared at her in shock.

"No," said Zira. "Something's going on. We need to be on guard."

"But... what could a crow even do? Peck us to death?"

"Like I said..." Zira gave him an irritated look. "That was no crow."



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“Could it have been Loki?” Adam suggested. “He can turn into all sorts of things, including animals.”

“No,” said Zira. “It felt more... feminine.”

“A lady crow?”

Zira sighed and shook her head in exasperation.

“Come on, let’s just go.” She took his hand and led him further along the path.

They walked in silence for a while through the forest.

The trees were dressed for autumn in yellow, orange, and red leaves, and soon Adam heard raindrops pattering against the canopy overhead. Thunder rumbled ominously from the dark gray clouds rolling in over the horizon, and the wind made the trees sway and rustle.

“A storm is brewing,” he said. “Shall we seek shelter at the crow’s castle?”

“We can do that.”

They jogged the last stretch until they reached the stone wall surrounding the estate.

A black cat sat grooming itself on top of the wall. It stopped when they approached, watched them, then leapt down on the other side.

Adam and Zira climbed over the wall and dropped into the large garden.

Zira smiled at Adam. “Here no one from school can see us.” She gave him a quick kiss on the cheek.

“Yeah,” said Adam and pulled her close, but she turned away.

“Why do we have to keep it a secret?” asked Zira. “About us, I mean? You’ve already broken up with Silje. Don’t you want people to know we’re together? Am I not good enough?”

“Of course you’re good enough,” said Adam. “The best. But Silje was really upset, so I told her she was amazing, just that I couldn’t be with anyone right now, no matter who, and it’ll look kind of strange if... well, you see?”

Zira squinted at him with narrowed eyes. “Right, so she’s amazing, huh?”



"Don't be jealous, you know what I mean."

"Maybe," she said, taking his hand as they walked on. "At least I hope so."

They walked up to the entrance of the crow's castle. The black cat sat on the steps waiting for them. It meowed loudly twice as they came closer. Adam stopped and looked at it. It stared back with big yellow eyes.

"Can you read cats' minds too?" he asked.

"No," said Zira. "They're mysterious animals. None of my vampire powers work on them."

"Mysterious maybe, but not very bright," said Adam. "Silje's cat always climbs up high in the trees after squirrels and then doesn't dare to come down. It can meow for hours until someone gets a ladder. You'd think it would learn after the first hundred times, but nope."

"Silje this, Silje that," Zira said sourly, letting go of his hand.

"But... why is the door open?" said Adam. It stood slightly ajar, and the black cat slipped inside through the narrow gap.

He walked up and pushed the door. It creaked loudly as it slowly swung open into the dark hallway.

"Strange," said Zira. "We're usually careful to keep it shut."

The cat was scratching at the carpet in the hallway, but when they came in, it stopped and ran off.

They continued into the library. It was dark there too, but in the faint light from the window Adam saw another black cat sitting on the table, this one with slightly thicker fur.

"We could do homework," he said, shooing it away. "Maybe the rain will have stopped when we're done."

"Why are there so many cats here?" said Zira, glancing around.

"Maybe they're taking shelter from the rain," said Adam. "The door was open."

He lit the oil lamp on the table. The light chased away the shadows.

Then Adam realized what Zira had really meant. Hundreds of black cats stood in a ring around them. Nearly the entire library was full!

They didn't move, but their yellow eyes stared at them as if bewitched.



“Oh,” said Adam.

One of the cats was different from the rest. It was larger and had green eyes.

It crawled slowly across the floor toward them, ears flat, tail twitching.

“Hey, kitty,” said Adam, crouching down. “Come here, kitty-kitty...”

All the cats arched their backs and hissed!



Chapter 2

A Symphony of Claws and Teeth



The cat with the green eyes leapt at Adam!

He raised his arms like a shield just before the claws hit his face. Instead they sliced into the thin skin on his hands, leaving them covered with stinging red scratches!

“Ow!” he shouted, trying to shake the cat off, but it only clawed its way further up his arms, centimeter by centimeter, closer and closer to his vulnerable face.

Until Zira grabbed its tail and slammed it hard against the wall.

The cat meowed piteously and dropped to the floor.

The other cats shrank back in fright for a moment, but then they all jumped at once! They scratched, bit, and hissed. Some leapt at them from the table, while others tried to climb up their legs!

Zira grabbed one by the scruff and hurled it away. It flew through the air, crashed into a bookshelf, fell to the floor, sprang up again, and attacked anew!

Adam used his legs to kick while shielding his face with his arms, but it was hopeless—they were far too many!

“We have to get out!” shouted Adam. “To the cave!”

“Good idea,” said Zira.

He ran out of the library and over to the rug in the hallway. He pulled it aside, revealing the trapdoor leading down to the old troll cave.

Adam grabbed the handle and lifted the hatch.

Zira shook off a couple of hissing cats and jumped down the stairs. Adam ran after her and shut the hatch above them with a bang.

They could hear the cats hissing, scratching, and clawing on the other side of the hatch.

“Why didn’t you use the knives?” asked Adam.

“But... they’re just cats,” said Zira. “And cute.”

Adam stared at her in disbelief. “I didn’t think they were cute at all!”

He held out his hands, now covered in red stripes, blood dripping from them.



She gasped. "Oh dear, you need band-aids."

"Band-aids!" said Adam. "I need bloody bandages and a week in the hospital!"

"Now, now," said Zira. "Don't be so dramatic, we've got plasters in the food cave."

"Fine," he said. "For lack of bandages and an ambulance, I guess we'll try plasters."

The wounds prickled and stung, but it didn't hurt as much as it looked. Maybe his hands were in shock. His head felt in shock too. What had just happened?

They went into the food cave, and Adam sat down on a chair while Zira opened the big chest. She pulled out a bottle of disinfectant, a pack of wet wipes, and a box of band-aids.

"I'll have to see a doctor anyway," said Adam. "I heard you have to if you're bitten by an animal, let alone fifty."

"Why were they so angry at us?"

"I'm sure Loki's behind it. He's been quiet for far too long now. The cats must be bewitched somehow."

"Hand, please," said Zira. "So I can disinfect, clean, and bandage."

Adam held out the worst bleeding hand. Drop after drop fell onto the floor.

Zira put some disinfectant on a wipe and was about to clean the wounds.

She froze. Just stared at the cut. And licked her lips.

"Uh... Zira?" asked Adam. "Are you okay?"

"So much blood..." said Zira. "Maybe... I could... taste just a little?"

Adam stared at her in shock. Had he heard right?

"You want to drink my blood?"

Zira shook her head, blinking rapidly. "No, of course not," she said with an embarrassed smile. "Sorry, I... I don't know what came over me."

"You can taste a little," he said, lifting his hand toward her face. "If you want? It's dripping on the floor anyway."

Zira looked at him with a slightly frightened expression. Her lower lip trembled.

"D-don't tempt me," she said. "I... I don't know if that would be s-safe..."



“Alright then.” Adam cleared his throat. “Just bandage it.”

Zira nodded, disinfected, cleaned, and put on plasters. She worked quickly, and soon both his hands looked like mummies. Even his forehead and one cheek got a couple of strips.

“Good thing none of them scratched your eyes,” said Zira.

“Yeah, hooray.”

“We’ll sneak out through the garden entrance.”

“It’s really strange that a whole flock of cats attacked us,” said Adam. “What if it’s part of some big coordinated attack on all of us? Maybe Tobias and Tara are in danger too?”

“Maybe,” said Zira. “Do you know where they are now?”

“Tara’s at Trollkoppen. She works there after school every Friday.”

“Okay, then let’s check there first!”



Chapter 3

Lunch at Café Trollkoppen

Tobias and Roger walked into Trollkoppen, Trollheim's only café.

They took off their wet jackets and hung them on the coat rack by the door. Tobias cast a glance out the big window onto the street outside. Rain was pouring down, and distant lightning lit up the dark sky, followed by booming thunder.

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But inside the café it was cozy as always. Dark walls decorated with pictures of trolls, dim lighting, and seating areas shaped like giant brown cups. They always made Tobias think of those spinning teacups at carnivals.

“Here,” said Tobias, helping Roger into a vacant coffee cup. Each cup had a sofa seat along the round wall around a little table in the middle. On the table lay a menu beside a lit candle.

Roger set aside his white cane and sat down. He wore a worn blue denim jacket and big, cool sunglasses, and since he couldn’t smoke, he was chewing gum vigorously.

“Hi!” shouted Tara. She smiled and waved to them from behind the counter. “I’ll come take your order in a moment!”

Tobias waved back and slid into the cup on the other side of the table.

“I’m impressed,” said Roger. “Even with the reward you guys got for saving Silje, Tara still went and got a job.”

“Oh, none of us get to touch that money anymore,” said Tobias with a sigh. “At first we were allowed to use some. We spent a lot on repairing the crow’s castle. Adam got himself a new phone and football shoes, I bought some books, a laptop, and a nice chess set. Tara bought new clothes and a bike.”

“And thirty Nintendo games,” said Roger.

“Yeah, exactly. But it didn’t last long. Our parents must have had a crisis meeting, because suddenly the money dried up for all of us. What was left was put in savings, and we’re not allowed to touch a penny until we’re eighteen. They said it’s unhealthy for kids to have too much money, and it needs to be saved for something sensible later in life. Like avoiding student loans, getting a driver’s license, or buying an apartment.”

“Sensible,” said Roger.

“Yeah, but sooo boring.” Tobias sighed again and opened the menu on the table.

“Anyway,” said Roger. “Cool that Tara’s trying out working life. Maybe we’ll get a discount?”

Tara came hurrying over to their cup, beaming as always with a huge grin.

“Hello dear customers!” she said. “Welcome to Trollkoppen! What’ll it be today?”

“I’ll have a Pepsi Max,” said Roger. “And a large fries with extra grill seasoning.”



"Got it!" Tara scribbled eagerly in a little notebook.

"Let's see..." Tobias flipped through the menu. "I'll have a hot chocolate and a custard bun."

"No, you won't," said Tara.

"What?"

"That's unhealthy. And you want to live a long and happy life, don't you?"

"Well..."

"You'll have a coffee and a salad. Back in a sec!" She dashed behind the counter and started pulling out plates.

"But..." Tobias looked after her in dismay. "I don't like coffee. Or salad."

"I'll take the coffee," said Roger. "I've started to like it. The trick is to add plenty of milk and sugar."

"I doubt I'll get sugar."

"The customer should always be right," said Roger. "If she does that to all her customers, she won't last long here."

"I suspect she only does it to me. She's always so picky about what I eat."

"Yeah, because you two are together now, right?"

Tobias cleared his throat. "Maybe, maybe not."

"You can't keep it secret," said Roger. "You two are the talk of the class. Trollheim's Romeo and Juliet!"

"We haven't even kissed or anything," said Tobias. "It's basically like we're still just friends."

"Friends with benefits," said Roger.

"Huh?"

"Never mind. You're just so... slow."

"Oh yeah?" said Tobias. "Are you dating anyone, then? Or are you actually even slower? Roger the snail."



“Touché,” said Roger with a grin.

“You’re full of foreign words today.”

“Well... I’ve been listening to a lot of audiobooks lately, even in English. I never used to, but it’s actually fun. The eyes are dull, but the ears are sharp.”

“Okay, but wasn’t there something else you wanted to talk about today?”

“Ah, straight to the point!” said Roger. “Okay, it’s Halloween soon, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Apparently it’s tradition that the eighth grade at Trollheim Middle School organizes the Halloween party. They go all out, costumes and everything.”

Tobias nodded.

“But we’ve got a problem,” said Roger. “Silje has taken on the responsibility of organizing the whole thing.”

“Is that so bad? She’s good at that stuff.”

“Yeah, but she’s been going around telling everyone in class

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