

the sparrow

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the sparrow

by [reviewcycle](#)

Summary

after you run away from your clan, you travel far west, hoping to find a new place to lay down roots. during a particularly nasty snow storm, you come across a closed off ronin with a sealed blade and even more secretive past, travelling in the same direction.

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

hellooo thanks for reading!! a lot of this is self indulgence and want, i've recently gotten back into writing fanfiction and am having loads of fun. this in particular has been festering in my google docs for a while now i'm glad to get it off my chest

the coldfront was coming sooner than you expected. you should've cut your losses and stayed in the last town but it was far too late to try to return. all you had was the exceedingly heavy pack on your back, full of everything you owned and a skein of water on your side, enough to last you a day or two at most.

you've been traveling for longer than you would like to admit. scared to slow or settle down for too long, your family hadn't been pleased by how you left (like a thief in the night). you breathe meager heat into your hands and sigh, wincing as your ribs throb in response (you'd slept on too many threadbare pallets). to travel safely, your plan was to appear as a man, under your too big clothing and sunhat was your amulet, magically imbued and subduing your own spiritual pressure to uphold the magical deceit.

the snow was up to your knees by the time the outline of a shabby house appeared on the twilight horizon, nearly sagging with relief you hastened your speed, and soon enough you were upon the truthfully pitiful stone abode.

though, any shelter was better than braving the steadily brewing storm. after checking out the meager rooms and what seemed to be a small supply closet, you finally took stock. a fireplace, with an old pot, some old rice that seemed edible in the dark light of the rising moon, as well as a decent bedroll, although moths had gotten to it and it smelled dank and musty.

it was... tidy but clearly abandoned. surely, whoever lived here before wouldn't mind a little company. you survey the home, the supply closet you came from was behind you, you can see the door, as well as what seems to be a kitchen area (the fireplace was there, after all) connected to what looked to be a sitting room. it really was a miracle that vermin didn't get to the rice before you did, but you were never one to question a blessing.

with a resolved sigh, you set your things down near the fireplace but still in the open area of what you designated the sitting room and decided to try and find some wood in the back of the storage closet, as well as snow for the pot to heat up so you can take a bath, maybe even cook some of the precious rice.

a bit later, the room was significantly warmer with a fire and you had finished taking a dreadfully cold bath with a bucket left in the semi kitchen. you were considering taking off

your ratty clothing and washing them when the door to the shabby home started to rattle, very different from the wind that had been beating the walls down earlier. no, someone was on the other side.

scrambling, you grab your shirt and pull it over your head, along with putting your thinner pants back on. while you were on your hands and knees- the unyielding stone floor biting into your flesh- the door swung open, smacking against the inside of the house with a deafening clap. the breath caught in your throat, your hand so close, but too far from the sword you used to defend yourself. however... from the looks of it, whoever this person was wouldn't be impacted by your weapon.

he was huge, bigger than any man should be, and he also wore a heavy coat. he ducked low to enter, his orange eyes burning into you- the rest of his face covered by a wooden helmet. your eyes stared back.

he moved, you did not, too scared to avert your eyes you watched him as he calmly and slowly closed the door firmly behind himself and again you two stared at each other.

he speaks first, voice deep, you know that if you were closer it would shake you. "forgive my intrusion, sir. but i would've caught my death out there."

you nearly melt in relief, he thought you were a man. good. clearing your throat you sit up, crossing your legs casually, "it's nothing. can't have you dyin' on my front step." your voice is hoarse, unused since you left the village- it wasn't like you got frequent conversation.

covered in rapidly melting snow, the man started to disrobe and you came to your senses, "oh, my goodness. sorry, you can hang your clothes up by the fire."

he nodded, his back to you as he stripped wet layer after wet layer. and you averted your eyes, busying yourself with the rice. fortunately, you had food from the previous town you visited.

"where did you come from, stranger?" you asked, trying to get a feel for who he was, or what kind of person would travel during a blizzard. aside from you, the runaway.

".. i came from far south for a job." he grunts, you could tell he was tolerating you, unless he just sounded like that all the time. considering the weather, you would find out soon enough. now shirtless and in his breeches, you could see the glory of his scarred, muscular yet padded body- it was clear he was strong, those muscles were well supported by his fat.

he could eat you alive, it looked like. his face (what could be visible through the wooden helmet, anyway), was stern; or at least his eyebrows were, eyes intense as you had seen earlier and his long lustrous hair was paler than the beams of moonlight, like the darkness herself had hand spun every near luminous strand. the hair was gathered in a low bun, to keep it out of his way. you half watched him as he hung up his humongous clothing on the lines of string you set up earlier for your own clothing.

the silence was heavy, but he speaks again, catching eyes with you. he'd caught you ogling his body and seemed amused, if you were reading the look in his eyes correctly- but more often than not you were terrible at telling what people were thinking even when they said it

outright.

“sorry- it’s just, you have so many scars.” you almost reluctantly drag your gaze back to the pot, the rice is almost ready. while you were looking around for bowls you froze, your eyes on the larger than life sword laid against the wall in front of you.

his mammoth size already dwarfed you, but between him, the blazing heat of the fireplace, and this truly terrifying weapon, you freeze. trying to think, trying to process.

“worry not. that sword hasn’t been unsealed in many years, now.” he reassures you, still slowly, languidly, hanging up his clothing, you glance over at him and his eyes were earnestly on his work.

“right... sorry for staring. the rice will be done soon, if you’d like some.” on a second look at the sword, sure enough it was tied intricately so it couldn’t be opened. what kind of man would willingly do something so foolish? it wasn’t like he needed a sword to kill or do genuine harm, you’ve seen his muscles. you have two wooden bowls, and a variety of eating utensils, so you give him the bigger one.

he sits close to you, mostly because he had no other option, given the exceedingly small dwelling. even sat, he towered over you as you spooned him in a bowl of rice, the bowl that was too large to you was practically normal in his massive hands. he nods his head slightly in thanks,

“thank you for this meal, you didn’t have to share.”

you laugh, a little surprised, “i can’t imagine not sharing, you should eat until you’re full.” he was... amicable, all things considered.

dinner is quiet, you had your back turned to him, facing the fire to give him the leeway to eat with his helmet off. after dinner, you had two bowls, he had four (though he could probably eat more), you were starting to feel tired.

getting up you held up the bedroll. it was too big for you but not big enough for him. “well, if we lay it out the long way you should be able to fit most of your body onto this, huh?”

he huffed out what seemed to be a laugh. “i carry my own bedroll, thank you.”

you glanced over at his things, seems being huge had its perks because he could carry way more than you did.

“plus, that thing is musty, and there’s no room for us both to have a bedroll, so you can just sleep on mine. call it paying it forward on your kindness toward me.”

after everything was settled, your clothes were hanging- still damp, his were sopping wet. his surprisingly luxurious bedroll covered most of the space sans for the entrance area and the door. which you used the old bedroll to block the air from the bottom, just to keep you warm while the fire died down.

“thanks, i appreciate it... do you have something i can call you?” your back is to him as you pretend to situate your bag. your traitorous shortsword was in the bag, available for you to grab since you decided to use your bag as a pillow.

“jin is fine. and yours?”

“people usually call me sparrow,” you reply, a bit evasively, the people in the last few towns seemed to name you on your own, and that was fine by you.

he pauses in a way that seems thoughtful. “nice to meet you, sparrow. looks like we’re going to be in each other’s company for a while.”

“i hope you’re not disappointed in my conversation, i don’t have much to offer.” you confide, your wet boots were by the fire and dry socks on your feet, you weren’t stripping anymore than necessary due to the fact it was freezing outside.

“not an issue...” he pauses before speaking again, “you came from the town back east.” a statement more than a question.

you turn to look at him, his voice too close. he was too close, but this pitiful shack was too small!!

“no! i mean, kind of, but i came from back that way.” you point vaguely with your thumb the way you came.

you lay on your back, trying to ignore the hulking man in your peripheral, “you’re a traveler as well,” you start, testing the waters.

he gives a noise of agreement, “something like that, and it seems you’re the same.”

“and... do you have a destination?” you clenched your hand on your side furthest away from him. what were you doing?? if he was with you all the time, he would surely find out your secrets. however... he seemed kind enough maybe one of those secrets could protect you. he started talking midway through your internal monologue.

“.. so no i don’t really. in fact i was thinking of heading west to the mountain towns,”

“could we travel together?” you sit up too quickly, hurting your pride further in the process. too eager.

“i mean, i could handle the food and you could handle the security?”

you resisted the urge to wilt, not being able to see his eyes in the dying light of the fire made him seem even more imposing, but with the lack of light was also the loss of heat. and jin had plenty to spare.

still, his voice was light, “sure,” his deep voice really did shake you and you swallowed down the butterflies in your throat, praying he couldn’t tell how much you were being affected.

“we have plenty of time to discuss these terms, goodnight jin.”

wanting to avoid further questioning you laid down on your side, your back to the stranger, and soon enough you were asleep.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

you both travel through the snowy forest and get to know a little bit more of each other in a hot spring before reaching the next town. here, you really find out what sort of "job" brought jin so far west in the first place.

Chapter Notes

you can tell i got carried away but this was very fun to write!! i even made a few moots would y'all believe me if i said i liked captain kurotsuchi 🤪 he's so!!! he!!! im gonna work on his fic next but i think that one would be more erotic

jin was fretting, it seems, over you, which was embarrassing enough but his large warm hands were poking and prodding at you. you could barely fight him off, and fight is very generous of a word when all you did with half-heartedly groan and squirm the latter of which hurt you even more.

he feels your head, your neck, your fever had finally broken. he offhandedly notices the necklace again, unknowing it was the maker of your male facade. the fact your spiritual pressure was astonishingly low was possibly why you had asked to accompany him. you had barely enough to defend yourself- which made sense looking at your seemingly unused sword.

by the time you awoke fully, you were warm again, and your eyes focused- as much as they could without the glasses you wore- on jin's wide expanse of back. he was huddled over the pot, that looked surprisingly normal sized next to him, and the smell of cooking meat- actual meat was fully in the air.

you sit up with a groan, but you can kind of tell he knew you were awake before you even started moving. halfway through the movement, you realize that your tunic was replaced, the one covering you is way too big and heavy for you. instantly, you stop moving. taking a mental check on your faculties. nothing seemed out of place but your clothing, and that makes you relax a bit until he speaks up, not bothering to move. or perhaps, not wanting to startle you.

“i secured some deer, they were milling about, so i got us one.”

your heart flips. us. whatever this fixation you were developing was getting out of hand.

“oh... that’s nice.” he was the only other person around for miles, of course he was the one who undressed you. how pitiful had you been for him to feel the need to nurse you to relative health?

slowly walking over, you sit on his other side. your eyes indulgently sweeping across his form, he wore a close fitting shirt- a surprising upgrade from shirtless. still, the sleeves were short enough both his arms were exposed. you secretly wished you had a mask to cover your face as well- at least you could hide your embarrassment and shame.

on your third glance, you realize he had been looking at you already. you adjust your glasses nervously, the air between you two was heavy. thick, tension weighed down upon your shoulders like the many lies you’ve told; that you must continue to tell. he speaks first, and you resist showing the tingle it sends up your spine by poking the hot embers with the fire poker.

“forgive me for undressing you, but you had sweat through your clothes..” his voice gives away no judgment, and since you couldn’t see his face, you weren’t necessarily sure if what he was saying were what he truly thought, or if he was simply biding his time to trespass against you. he speaks again, his voice rumbling deep in his chest with a mirthless chuckle,

“i have no reason to judge you, especially with this helmet.”

your eyes drop from his, unfortunately dragging your gaze from his head, down his wide shoulders and broad chest, past his sculpted- beefy would be more apt- arms and his thick thighs, you snap out of your reverie, poking the fire harder- it makes an ember flop out and you hurriedly toss it back in, feeling jittery.

“thank you,” you say, the added ‘for saving my life’ hung invisibly in the air. you clear your throat again. he offers you one of your (small to him) cups, filled with water. taking it, you chug the cool liquid down.

“also, i understand if you don’t want to travel with me-”

“i will travel with you. we’re going the same way, it would be a waste otherwise.”

he interrupts you, his focus on the deer, flipping a few large chunks in an even larger pan with a pair of chopsticks.

you freeze, that seemed to happen a lot around this man, it was becoming a steadily growing issue.

“are you sure? i mean, i was asleep- sick- for how long..? i couldn’t ask you to protect me just because i’m cooking for you.” it was ridiculous, this guy, whoever he was, had to be absolutely crazy! what was his motivation for doing this?

“those things don’t matter to me, i have seen much worse.” he pauses, but decides to say nothing else this time.

your face feels hot. what the hell was he talking about? and here he was still rambling, you really were a poor conversationalist. here he was, offering you exactly what you asked for free of charge, and yet you refused him. in your despair you notice he was still talking.

“i would have agreed to your terms even if the events of last week hadn’t occurred.”

trying to hide the dumbfounded look on your face, you busy yourself with preparing the food bowls and the thankfully large plates. he’d even managed to find some vegetables, potatoes at that. you needed to change the subject from your ineptitude, so you blurt something out.

“how did you hunt if your sword is sealed shut?”

at that he stiffens a bit more, and there’s more silence than comfortable.

“traps, bare strength, the usual.”

you pause as well, just how strong was he to kill a whole deer (of this size!) with no real weapon? you can’t resist a shudder of palpable fear, and play it off by outstretching your hands toward the fire. he takes notice, obviously. you two sat too close for him not to.

“if you’re cold, you could sit closer to me during dinner.”

what the hell was he talking about?

“don’t think you can just coddle me, i’m a prideful man.” but still... you were cold almost always, and sitting close to his wondrous body would be a dream, but you absolutely could not get distracted and falter.

he chuckles, clearly not phased by your posturing. the food is quickly distributed and he turns his back to eat. you do similarly, sneakily leaning your back against his side. he really was warm.

you both pack up relatively quickly, you especially considering you didn’t have much to begin with. bag on your back and snowshoes on, you both abandoned your previous dwelling with little fanfare.

the air was freezing, biting and nipping at your exposed skin, your lungs feeling.. refreshed actually, with the air so cold. jin was largely unaffected. the mountain of a man made sure, steady footprints, his long, loping gait not faltering once.

needing something, anything to take your mind off of how shapely he looked from behind, you speak up from behind your scarf.

"so how important is this job to travel so far?"

he says nothing for a few more moments than what you think is normal.

"very. the stakes are high, and it's time sensitive." he didn't feel the need to say that he was working that very job now, of course not. however, if you had the brains to ask, he might've told you.

unfortunately, you had no such brains- at least not on this issue.

you hum, nodding very solemnly. "i see. i will make sure not to hold you back."

the trek to the forest was more boring than the actual (unseen to you) path through the wilderness. you both walk through the quiet areas with relative silence. jin pointing out what plants grew despite the frost, you sharing vague stories you'd heard from other villages you'd visited.

the forest itself was quiet, sleeping even, at first glance until you slowed down and noticed the small things, the soft beating heart of the woodland creatures surviving despite the weather. you even see a few deer.

"why did you choose so far west to live?" he asks, you'd started walking side by side, he had a larger stride than you and so he'd elected to slow down for your sake. already the stinging pain of being a burden was palpable.

"needed to get out of my hometown, there was nothing there for me." he helps you (help being the key word), over a fallen tree by grabbing you around the waist and setting you down gently on the other side. he'd allowed you to keep the tunic he leant you on, and it was warmer than half the clothing you were able to pack.

"who gave you that blade?" you ask, eyes focused on your feet so you didn't trip and make a fool out of yourself. it'd been two days of trekking through the dense forest and he'd caught you so many times, you could feel his strong, firm hands on you even still. ever gentle. shaking the thoughts, you forced yourself to listen.

"my former master... he was killed abruptly." the silence that follows descended like a hungry group of vultures.

"he'd taken me in, monstrous as i was. taught me his ways and i had never been able to repay his kindness." with a shrug, his helmet faces your direction but you miss it, seeing as how you're looking at your feet.

"so.. now i help other people. revenge had been my first option, and i deeply regret the routes i took while on that journey. but well..." he swallows, "i decided i wouldn't let my anger speak for me." he places a heavy hand on his sword, as if to remind himself of the weight on his shoulders, his own personal path to redemption and answers for something he felt the vague feelings of but couldn't name. not yet.

you nod, so you were a charity case, basically. but it also explains why he was a ronin, it especially explained why he sealed his blade away.

"sorry if you weren't ready to talk about that," you muster, looking up at him again.

his head shakes, "if I didn't want to share, i wouldn't. as travelling partners, we need at least a bit of trust between us."

your stomach twists painfully. trust. you don't give yourself time to stew before you shoot another question.

"so the job is west? how far?"

any further than where you were going (an allegedly pretty coastal town called karakura) ended up in a completely new continent. one sparsely travelled. yes of course you wanted to get away from your clan, but a new continent... that was a bit too extreme, for now.

"well, i'm helping a grieving family find a lost member, she'd been kidnapped in the middle of the night and whisked away. it was unlike her, they say." he doesn't share more, possibly because of some confidentiality he had to uphold, but he does pose his own question.

"wait, you said you came from there," he names your town and you gratefully hold back a cringe. "are you familiar with the area?"

not wanting to seem suspicious, you nod, using the creeping despair you felt to mask your terror. there was just no way he was looking for you. a frown on your face you shake your head woefully, glad to hide your eyes from him.

"i know of the more prominent families, but stealing women? what has this world come to, truly."

before he can ask something else- thankfully - he pauses and sniffs the air. you'd noticed it was one of his habits, sniffing things, gruff noises that- if you were trying hard enough felt like growls. his... fixation with securing the perimeter. you had assumed that he was just someone with keen senses, which wasn't uncommon, but the raw power you felt just by being near him belied something else.

"there's a hot spring nearby." he declares, walking off towards the left somewhere.

forced to keep up, you stumble along behind him, he seemed excited for this. you weren't really sure how he knew, but it soon hit you, the smell of sulfur and the gradual heat from the water wafting over you both.

you two had been together nearly a month by now, and through that time you'd become keenly aware he was diligent, and very serious, but not unkind. his humongous size and helmet simply made him more opposing than he seemed.

coming across the decent sized pool of steaming water, he puts his bag down and starts stripping his clothing again.

having no real thing to hide- your necklace had worked seamlessly so far, using spiritual pressure to conceal and hide your true body was the feat that caused you to be near constantly strained- but it was worth it.

hopefully in karakura town, you'd be able to find a famed tool maker, to optimize your necklace so it used less spiritual pressure. until then, you'd have to make do.

stripping down your clothing, you take quick glances at his back. his shapely ass and fat padded back and legs forced a bit of drool to collect in your mouth and you swallow hastily. though, he looks... more hairy than he did in the cabin. how long ago was that? you were asleep for almost a week of it, maybe you were misremembering.

"do you know how many more days we have until we reach the next town?" you'd been talking about maps, having shared with each other, hell, he didn't even need a compass apparently. he used the stars to navigate.

despite his excitement for having found the hot spring he answers, finally kicking off his pants, leaving himself in his fundoshi. he turns to look at you, helmet still firmly on his head. "... about a week."

maybe it's because dishonesty had become your own moon and stars, or maybe it was because you'd been memorizing more of his tells than you care to admit to anyone but yourself, but you think he's lying.

still, you nod, averting your eyes as you carefully fold up your clothing until you're sure he's submerged in the water. naked (to his eyes) aside from your own fundoshi, you slip into the heated water with a groan.

the silence that permeates the air, for once, is pleasant. though, you'd misjudged the size of the natural pool, because if you moved anymore, you'd be in his lap. still, you try to reason with yourself, humming as you feel his leg brush yours under the water. he really did seem hairier.

"guess i have to string myself into another tree." you joke. since you two have been in the woods, jin had insisted you make camp up a sturdy tree, yet he still slept on the ground. at first you'd joked he'd taken your name- sparrow- a bit too seriously, but it seems that was his only request of you.

he ate the food you cooked without question. most of it meat with whatever strange vegetation he scrounged up, most of which unfamiliar to you. just two days ago you both had milled some plant or another to make some meager bread that actually tasted pretty good.

he doesn't seem amused now, his arms spread across the "lip" of the pool, arms wide, you were sitting across from him, in full view of his hefty chest. his nipples were hard, and in the light of the near setting sun, his eyes glinted.

hell, if you looked hard enough- and trust, you tried- you could scarcely see the soft bobbing of his bulge under the bubbling water. besides that, his knee was clearly slotted between your legs, and he didn't apologize once. which, was unlike him completely.

honestly, you aren't sure how long you were in the hot spring, at least until he got out first, insisting it was time for dinner. you weren't completely sure how he knew you were hungry before you yourself did, but you never complained.

dinner was short, clearly something was on his mind. and if you were reading him right... something he didn't want to talk about. which was fine with you. nearly every time you talked, you had to lie to him, especially now you know he was looking for a missing person. most likely a missing you.

after shaking a few trees, jin finally finds one he thinks is suitable for you to take. and you make the climb, up and up until you find a nice steady branch to wrap yourself up, tie

yourself down, and try your best to sleep. truthfully, you wanted to be next to him, snuggled into his strong arms, but he insisted it was the safest way for you to sleep. strong, feral animals resided in these woods.

*

the next three days were... interesting. despite travelling with him as usual, you felt as if you went nowhere. he was more handsy than usual- his usual being the occasional helping you over something big and making sure you didn't hurt yourself. now his hands lingered, on your back, your hip, you even caught him "discreetly" sniffing at you when he helped you up over something. if you were crazy, you'd assume he was taking the more treacherous path on purpose, especially considering he was the only one who really knew where you both were going.

you'd gotten the ill written map back near your hometown, from some sketchy old woman who said "it'll take you where you need to go" which... was unhelpful especially now. the forest wasn't even on the map!

jin had stopped, you'd walked way later than usual, and now he was checking out trees for you to sleep in. fortunately, a particularly gigantic one had a hollow, just big enough for you. it made you shiver, wondering what creature that huge had made the hole, but you put that aside when you realize how cozy it was. you leave your bag inside and head back down. jin was poking at a fresh fire with entirely too much interest.

he seemed... prickly, and as the sun made its descent, he rushed you along eating so you could go to bed. jin was clearly worried. and sick of being pushed around (but not necessarily of being manhandled), you speak up.

"jin, stop. what is wrong with you?" you say, not really sure how else to word your concerns.

he pauses, his hands clenching at his sides. he needed to cut his nails, you thought- they were sharp looking, absolutely wicked. "i've seen evidence of wolves in the area, so i need you up the tree."

you bristle, "wolves?!" jaw dropped, you look around, as if they'd be waiting in the shadows to be discovered right then.

"why didn't you say something earlier? we.. you..."

truthfully, what could you do? but you were worried about your travelling partner. and not ~~because you were forming a crush~~ because he was protecting you and forging your path to karakura.

"nothing to be done." he was gently- more gently than he had been in the last three days- nudging you toward your tree. "now get into your nest, and don't bring attention to yourself. no matter what."

unsure of what to say, you barely notice him pushing you along while you're talking, "i- well be careful! wild animals are dangerous, jin."

he gives a dark chuckle, and you aren't sure whether to be giddy with excitement at him herding you, or angry that he was treating another (perceived) man as he would a woman. still, you climb up and up into the hollow and get ready for bed. the moon- full in all her splendor, had arisen beautifully.

on your way to sleep, when you decide to call out to jin, mostly to say goodnight, and half to tell him to be careful again- you hear an ear shaking howl.

way too close for comfort.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

after your close encounter with what could have very well been your death, your journey with the ronin is at a momentary pause. in the town you must resupply, as well as get new clothing for the warmer weather approaching.

Chapter Notes

i wanted to post this days ago but between my battle with the plot and irl family issues i didn't get the chance,, my bad yall 😭😭 also yes i love run on sentences sue me i guess lmao if you see a spelling error no you did not !! see you soon xx

a hard shiver runs down your spine at the thought of leaving the tree, and almost immediately jin's voice telling you to stay still and quiet echo in your head. but... you weigh your options. where was he?

you were beyond terrified, had even been warned, and yet... you were worried for him. maybe he could fit inside your hollow (of course he couldn't, there was barely enough space for you). but the sound of that singular howl chilled you deeply.

taking a quick peek, your eyes scan the bright white snow, it was dark enough to be an issue, but bright enough for you to see jin was nowhere beneath you. body frozen still, you hesitate, moving from this tree could very well cause you the end of your life.

against your better judgement... you can barely stop yourself from scampering down the trunk. internally praying to whoever would listen that whatever danger was in the forest wouldn't choose you next.

your feet crunch too loudly in the snow, and you take a quick look around, your breath coming in small, quick bursts, puffs of cold air forming small clouds.

the coast was clear, and honestly you felt a little silly, there was nothing! you give a small huff of laughter. your eyes go to the ground, seeing jin's footsteps and following them. along the way you decide to use the bathroom, since all of your residual fear made it prevalent earlier.

refreshed and on your mission to find your traveling partner, you strain your ears, listening to the woodland noises (or the lack thereof). your best plan to get away from danger? climb the

closest tree, use your sword for protection. and... wait for jin to find you, if it came to that. keeping your actual tree and campsite in your view, as dim as it was.

traveling along, you go in a deliberate circle, looking for any sign of him. until you step wrong, tripping over some uneven terrain- you curse, shooting upright, hand on your sword as you look around. truthfully, you weren't the best at fighting with it.

your clan centered working with magical items- their manufacture, improvement etc. it was how you made your necklace, and it was a bit of a shame you would need to see a different specialist in karakura town to get help on honing its ability. however, a different branch of your family put an emphasis on fighting.

tracking your eyes back down to the ankle you rolled, you realize there's a giant paw print. wolf? no... bear, at least it was big enough.

instantly, you're on edge again, looking around quickly before booking it as much as you could in the deep snow without drawing any attention to yourself. the tree was so close, but you felt the sense of some sinister foreboding presence. like you were being hunted. not bothering to look back, and spurred on by fear, you push yourself faster, launching at the tree and scrambling upward as fast as you could.

right underneath you, a heavy thud, followed by a guttural growl. whatever it was wanted you. badly. you bite down on the inside of your cheek, drawing blood as you scrape yourself higher, praying whatever was down there wasn't a good climber or jumper.

you pray too soon, the jaws of the wretched beast get so close to your leg you can nearly feel the loud snap of it's teeth in your bones. with little ceremony you drag yourself into the hollow, forcing yourself into the back corner and pointing the tip of your blade at the opening. you would be ready for it. whatever it was.

*

the next morning, you realize you fell into a dreamless sleep. the sky was bright as you climb back down. one thing you absolutely couldn't ignore were the claw marked gashes all over the trunk of the tree. you reach out to touch it when you hear something approach, you turn around, ready to strike, only to relax soon after.

jin's hands were up, although he didn't really need to. he looked completely normal, even a tad bit relaxed.

unfortunately, you were pissed beyond belief.
"what the hell was that?"

he starts to speak but you continue over him, raising your voice. you point at the tree trunk with your sword, still looking at him with a scowl.
"some THING chased me up the tree! i almost died!"

you could hear the frown in his voice as he lowers his hands to his side, walking past you to look at the trunk of the tree, nearly halfway through the thick girth of the wood. whatever that

beast was, wolf, bear, something worse... almost had you in its jaws.

"why did you leave the tree?" he asks, fingers brushing the claw marks, he seemed thoughtful, and even worse he didn't even sound upset or disappointed. something closer to concern and perhaps... guilt?

"i was looking for you. obviously." you huff, sheathing your sword roughly. you scowl some more, plopping down in the snow, finally daring to peek at your ankle. and what you saw wasn't good. swollen, slightly purple, and hurt as all get out.

scooping a handful of snow onto the spot to at least stop the swelling for a bit, jin was still at the tree, unmoving. pushing for answers- feeling like you deserved them since you nearly died- you speak up again.

"so... where were you? i went around the whole tree before that beast tried to make me dinner, and i didn't see hide nor hair of you." at this point, you didn't care if you sounded whiny. you almost died, trying to look out for him. although, to be fair, he hadn't asked you to do that, and that wasn't your agreement.

"i was scouting the perimeter like i always do." he answers coolly, and you can't tell if he's lying or not, but he did particularly seem to enjoy making sure there was nothing dangerous around.

"... alright." you grumble, holding the freezing snow to your ankle. "well, i rolled my left ankle."

that finally gets him to look, he turns towards you and takes two purposeful steps before kneeling down and locking eyes with you through his helmet, asking permission before he touches you.

you nod slightly, moving your hands out of the way to give him access. he gently takes you leg and sits it in his lap, and you avert your eyes, feeling an uncomfortable warmth bubbling up from your stomach to your face from his strong hands on your body again.

"... this isn't that bad," he murmurs, gently turning it over in his grasp.

you're about to object when he murmurs an incantation and healing light leaves his hands and sink into your skin. it's warm, and gradually the pain subsides. when he's finished, he pats your thigh, a signal for you to move your leg.

"you need to stay off it for a while, so i should at least carry you to town."

there's silence. he had already stood up and was dusting the snow off his clothes when he realized you hadn't said anything. your brain was overheating, had to be. maybe you'd hit your head last night and didn't know it.

"i- that's not necessary." you say hastily, doing your best to stand up.

"nonsense. if you walk on that injury it would undo my healing kido." he puts his bag on and attaches your tiny in comparison bag onto that, leaving both arms open for you, horrifyingly

enough.

"but- i'm a man! i can't let you walk me into town like some princess! what will they think of us?"

jin shrugs. already a ronin- and now a bounty hunter, it wasn't like he was the holder of a stellar reputation in the first place. "you can just make it known you had an injury and i saved you, everyone would understand."

you tongue over the bitten spot on the inside of your cheek in thought, you didn't really care about what the townspeople thought, you just wanted as much space between you and jin as possible. he was a liability at best, and downright dangerous to your cover at worst.

realizing you were out of any real arguments, you sigh, making your way over to him. you can only see his eyes, but they stare at you intensely. it was actually worrying how much he seemed to see right through you.

effortlessly, he scoops you up into his arms, and gets going on some unseen trail. the hot warmth of his body leeches into your chilled bones, and your head rests against him. he was carrying you bridal style, which- you weren't complaining. his warm breath fanned over your face occasionally, and you could feel his strong and steady heartbeat against your body.

warm, asleep, and being carried like some bride was how you entered the next town.

*

your ankle had healed up enough in jin's opinion, which finally meant you could restock supplies and get some warm weather clothing. since jin was your official unofficial escort, you both met up again at the tavern- he had been standing there waiting for you. sitting across from him at a wooden table, you nurse your stew, savoring the warmth, even though the flavor was a bit bland.

he had arranged to get his food sent up to your accommodations, obviously because he wished to keep his helmet on.

"so..." you probe, looking up at him through your lashes. "any news on the missing girl?" absolutely you had to ask, hopefully it lead him in the opposite direction so you could go to karakura on your own.

"yes actually, someone fitting the description had been seen heading in our direction." he seemed pleased, happy to restore a family of their lost member. if only he knew. the thought made your stomach churn. hopefully he never found out. you couldn't go back, not now. possibly not ever.

"that's great, i'm glad." though it was nice to not have to cook tonight or for breakfast since the tavern did both, you were quite honestly pretty satisfied despite your near death encounter.

"also, the keeper of the tavern informed me we secured the last available room, for a reasonable price as well."

cringing, almost on reflex, you reach for your coin purse to pay him the difference and he immediately denied you, ignoring your gesture. "don't be like that, sparrow. i almost left you to that.... beast. the least i can do is pay."

you're unmoved. "you carried me all the way to town." you whisper yell, not wanting the nearby tables to hear you. "i can't let you pay for the room!"

he shrugs, "you can pay for the next one." jin shut the conversation down with seven words, his thick arms folded across his broad chest. to shut up your stumbling, you shoved some more stew into your mouth.

together you both head upstairs- jin to the room, and you decide a bath was in order, so you leave him to his devices- so he could eat. after your surprisingly lush bath, you knock on the door to the room.

there's shuffling before he opens the door, having to bend down a bit to see you clearly. he was too big, as usual. you duck past him, hearing the door close and you set your bag down before your eyes are drawn to the centerpiece of the room- the enormous bed.

the singular enormous bed.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

after sleeping in each other's arms, the next leg of your journey together is calm- more or less. he's certain he found the lost young woman, and karakura town is on the horizon. you needed to find the chief "authority" on magical items, an (allegedly) eccentric urahara kisuke. can you get his help before jin heads back east with the wrong young woman? you hoped so.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

you woke up in a warm embrace, and on any other day, it would have delighted you, brought you a sense of profound joy, until you realized the bicep you rested on belonged to jin, and your back was pressed to his naked chest.

you sit up abruptly, and jin sits up after you, while you were rapidly rubbing the sleep from your eyes and mumbling out increasingly garbled apologies, the other man seemed wide awake.

"you have nothing to worry about, the fireplace went out in the beginning of the night and... well, you wouldn't let me leave the bed to stoke the flames."

your head whips around to stare at him incredulously. he could not be serious. you can't even see his eyes in the shadow of his helmet, but he sounds more amused than anything. turning back around you put your hot face in your hands and resist the urge to groan.

"if it helps any, you're stronger than you look."

it helps none. absolutely none. you get out of bed and hurry to dress, he was prattling on about breakfast being served soon, and you were simply glad to have something fill you other than butterflies.

*

nearly a week later, you both ended up on a well worn dirt path that slowly made its way into stone. your ankle had healed up well, which was a blessing- he couldn't hold you for more reason. and sure, your worrying had been for nothing. no one in town cared if you were carried by another man, as long as you could pay for your services, no one even bat an eye.

jin was more upbeat, most likely because the pay for this job was significant. you pretended to be happy for him, which wasn't very hard in the first place. though some other poor woman would be taken far east for no reason- jin would be off your trail.

speaking of, you both had traded in your heavier clothing for thinner robes and tunics. which was a great idea considering how hot it was on the coast. you saw the sparkling blue water first, eyes shielded by your hand as you point.

"jin! we're here!" you had enough money to maybe barter with the famed kisuke, but after that, you'd have to find a job and quickly. the last thing you wanted to do was starve after getting this far on jin's charity.

you both stop outside out the city, overlooking the whole town, you can clearly tell which building in the shopping district belonged to urahara. turning to your ever faithful traveling companion, you hold out your hand for him to shake.

"thank you, without you i would've died at least once."

he huffs, not quite a laugh, but takes your hand in his anyways, shaking it.
"we should meet up again for a meal. once you've settled down."

you nod, looking up at him, a small- yet genuine smile on your face. as much as you became fond of this mysterious ronin, you feared this was the last time you'd meet him, if your plan went the way it was meant to.

letting go of eachother, you bow politely before walking into town. he doesn't follow.

*

not that your hometown was small, but the bustle of karakura was unlike anything you'd seen yet. along the coast was a menagerie of boats- fishermen, trading vessels, private seafarers. the wares of the shops were also varied- food markets and fragrant spices, clothing, even materials for magical items! they were an essential hub for activity, you were nearly certain you wouldn't be found, much less see jin again in a place as busy as this.

trying to look less wide eyed and new, you come across a hospital of sorts, and a dark haired man smoking a pipe outside. you approach, hoping to get answers.

"excuse me, sir, could you point the way to the urahara shop?"

the man rubs his stubbled chin, looking you up and down- obviously you were new, but he gives a small smile before answering. "about six streets down that way," he points with his pipe. he seemed amused, but about what you couldn't say.

bowing politely, you head off in that direction.

by the time you make your way through the winding streets and bustling crowds to get in front of the shop you travelled all this way for, a tall dark skinned man was already turning the 'open' sign to 'closed'. you surge forward, horror on your face.

"wait! no, please, i came all this way to see mister urahara!"

he grunts, turning around and adjusting the glasses on his face to look down at you- not in a condensing way, he was simply just that tall. he even looks a bit sad for you.

"you can come back in two days, when the shop is open."

two days was too long. you reach into your pack, searching for one of the letters you'd exchanged with the man in charge, about your amulet you needed desperate help with and he was too happy to oblige, loving the idea of laying hands on new technology.

"wait! i have a letter from him, you're mister tsukabishi, right?"

still sympathetic but seemingly unimpressed, tessai nods. the shop was (in)famous, knowing the names of the frontmen wasn't anything special.

you finally produce one of the papers, from a small stack of them. you'd described your idea in detail, and the pitfalls of the product. urahara- kisuke he told you to call him- was beyond interested.

reading over the paper, tessai lets you in, handing the letter back and closing the door behind you both.

a slim little girl with dark hair and large eyes appears, and leading you off to a sitting room of sorts, with a,
"he will see you shortly,"

finally having part two of your five part plan finished, you relax. sitting on one side of the table and looking over the letters. while you reorder them the way they were, you realize a few of them were missing.

before you can panic about that, the sliding door opens, revealing the man you traveled all this way for- urahara kisuke. he ducks slightly to enter- too tall for the doorframe, his dark green samue fine and silky. his blonde hair cropped relatively short and framing his face. his grey eyes searching you imploringly- far less friendly than the demeanor he was putting off.

you stand, bowing politely and he waves away your formalities,

"aht, sit, sit! we have so much to talk about."

Chapter End Notes

blah blah hey yall :3 umm ive been packing to move houses, and also none of my interests (reading, writing, drawing, watching anime of any kind) have been interesting me and i will be calling it art block!! thank you

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