

Canis Lupus and the Dark North

by Toni White

Four-hoofed-white-tails: Deerses
Clawheads: Mooseses / Caribouses

Prologue

(Introducing the most important character and more.)

The small, cool clearing was filled with silence. Nothing moved. Nothing stirred the dewdrops that were forming on the soft, weightless leaves. Bushes were scattered around the dark green grass, with ripe fresh berries growing on each one.

One of the blueberry bushes rustled. This was unusual because every night the forest was unmoving, everything was asleep. A silver flash appeared from the bottom of the bush. It continued to rustle mysteriously, as though it was alive and trying to escape before being eaten. Then it stopped and there was silence again once more. Some of the animals that hunted silently at night stared down at the Wolfeses huddled behind the bush.

A small high-pitched whine came from the very bottom of the bush. Curled up against a bigger form was a pup, a Wolfeses pup. It was a small wet ball of black and blue fur. The bigger one drew her tongue across the squirming body, and whines of protest came from the blind, tiny thing. The larger of the two – the mother – finished grooming him and whispered into his small ears. “I think I’ll name you Canis. Canis Lupus, son of the greatest leaders of Pack Moon.”

Canis sighed, content with no longer being licked. The mother smiled warmly, looking almost sleepy, almost as if she had stayed up half the night caring for her little one. She got up. Oddly enough, she was only six inches tall. So small for a Grey Wolf, one of the largest canines in the world.

She picked up Canis by the scruff of the neck and padded off, making it seem like she didn’t know where she was heading. A large group of Wolfeses crowded around her, whispering excitedly. “It’s him! It’s the one who will lead our pack!” most of them whispered.

Tired and sore, the mother growled, acting as though she was about to snap her jaws in their faces. Canis whined, dangling helplessly from her jaws. The silver female whined, looking down at the pup in her jaws. She padded forward, curling up on a thick patch of ferns and leaves, curling up around Canis and nuzzling him lovingly. The group of wolves came forward, crowding around her, trying to nuzzle the pup.

“Stop!” a low, gravely yet somehow still gentle voice commanded.

The speaker stepped forward from the dark of the night, baring teeth. He was big – at least eight inches tall – and muscled. He growled, lifting his tail territorially and with leadership, standing in front of his mate. “Get in a line and give your thanks,” he growled again.

The Wolfses scattered, lining up from most important to least important. Each one bent, touching the pups nose, whispering, then leaving to sit along with the rest who had already done the same. The male smiled, sitting beside his mate, watching as even the littlest of pups paid their respects.

There was something about Canis that was special, and at his birth no one knew what was about to happen.

Chapter One – The Hunt

The day was warm, filled with light and loud chirping from the birds. There was a large grouping of Wolfses huddled together, talking about the next big hunt.

“You go down to the creek and see if there’s a group of four-hoofed-white-tails or clawheads down there,” said the biggest of them.

A grey and black one perked up. “But what happens if they run into trouble? They might not be able to get away fast enough,” he protested.

The first one shook his head. “Oh pipe down, he’ll be fine,” he sighed.

A young female glanced at him. “Can I go down with him?” she asked.

He nodded. “Yes, go down right now, so we’ll know ahead of time.”

They nodded and disappeared over the ridge, already tiny black shapes.

The first one sighed, sitting down and shaking out his ruffled fur. “Okay. Who wants to hide in the trees, and wait for those two to bring the prey running?” he asked.

Most of the Wolfses stepped forward and separated themselves into groups, before choosing the ones that would go for the head.

The first one nodded. He would be not joining in with the hunt. He padded off, tail swinging, suddenly going higher then straight up, like an alpha of the pack would.

One of the wise elderly Wolfses padded over to him. “Now, now... Remember your rank in the pack. You’re not alpha, remember?”

The other one scowled deeply but obeyed. “Yes, Mayline. I must remember my rank,” he muttered, lowering his head.

Mayline smiled and lifted her head. “Thank you, Uno,” she said contentedly.

Uno then padded away, muttering about when he was ever going to be alpha.

Canis sat, staring after the retreating Wolfeses as they headed off to hunt. He sighed, lowering his head. "I wish I were able to go hunting with the pack," he mumbled crossly.

His mother padded over to his side, nudging his shoulder. "Oh Canis, you'll have your hunt, I promise you that," she reassured him.

"I know... It's just Uno gets to hunt most of the time and I'm his best friend..."

"And you don't get to," his mother interrupted with a nod. She breathed softly on his face, trying to calm him. "Just wait, soon you'll be able to," she promised.

Although none of the Wolfeses knew then, that he wasn't going to be hunting for quite a long time.

The majority of the Wolfeses crowded in two groups on either side of the small strip of forest, eerie eyes watching the movement of the four-hoofed-white-tails that were shying away from the two other Wolfeses. The herders snapped and growled, lunging and scaring the white-tails into the trees, where the huge groups of other Wolfeses exploded on top of them, knocking them down and trying to get their prey for the pack. A lot of the white-tails got away that night, but the hunters had killed two rather large white-tails from the herd.

"We did it!" one of the smallest hunters panted, flopping down on his belly, dazed and excited.

"We did," the rest agreed.

Each Wolfeses helped carry the kills back to the camp, though at least four were left on lookout for any Bearses on the prowl for the scent of fresh meat.

Canis leapt up on all four paws. It was obvious that he had been asleep. He lolled his blue tongue, inhaling the warm heavy scent of fresh kill. He sat, tail thumping wildly against the grass, causing loose chunks to fly. Canis smiled slyly, watching as his pack members hauled in the prey.

They heaved the kills into the middle of the camp. Sitting down, they drew their tongues over their muzzles, wiping off the dried blood. They assembled in a group, choosing the lookouts and whispering under their breath, as to not disturb the feasting Alphas.

"Uno, Rose... You keep lookout with a Wolfeses of your choice. Just don't fight alright?" the Alpha male warned.

They nodded then bounded over to Canis. "Come on lookout with us," they pleaded.

He smiled and nodded. "Okay!" he yelped excitedly.

The night was sinking over the horizon as the rest of the Wolfeses finished eating. After the hunters had finished, Rose, Uno and Canis slunk sleepily over to the remains of the carcass, gnawing on the bits and pieces left.

Canis yawned, causing the others to yawn along with him. He padded over to his sleeping area and sat, staring up at the stars. Canis yawned again, eyes glassy with sleepiness. He curled up in a tight ball, belly round with a good filling. He snorted and fell asleep, all senses calmed.

Yet Canis felt a nervousness inside him. He knew something wasn't right, but there was nothing he could do. So he fell asleep, knowing something was coming.

Chapter Two – Gone

The night went on, quiet and peaceful, but nervousness held in the air like fog, never going away.

Canis woke, glancing around nervously. He sat, staring into the trees, seeing a flash of movement. He whimpered quietly to himself, feeling scared and useless. He got up and padded into the trees trying to find whatever was there. Nose to the ground, sniffing.

Canis lifted his head at a sudden noise, staring into the camp. He froze. Something was hovering over his parents, the Alphas. Something huge. It turned and stared at Canis, eyes a golden yellow flame of evil. He couldn't move, couldn't yell for help. It felt like a bad dream. Everything was going wrong.

It's just a bad dream. It's just a bad dream. This isn't actually happening, he whimpered in his head.

Canis squeezed his eyes shut, shivering then reopening them. He gasped, staring in despair at the empty sleeping area where his parents always slept.

“Nooooo!” Canis howled out in terror.

He bounded out of the trees, sniffing the scent. Something was mingling with it, something unknown to Wolf's kind. He sat, shivering madly in misery. “It's all my fault,” he whimpered.

Rose jerked out of her sleep, shivering. “Mom... Dad... Where are you?” she mumbled, lifting her nose and trying to touch empty air.

She blinked her eyes open, standing abruptly and staring around. “Mom? Dad!” she cried, fear filling her limbs. She leapt out of the bush she slept in and almost ran over Canis.

“Where are my parents?!” she howled, waking the nearby Wolf's.

They mumbled, kicking Rose with their hind paws. “Go back to sleep Rose. Your parents are fine,” they all growled sleepily, shifting and falling asleep again.

Rose shifted worriedly. “But they're gone!” she whined.

Canis nudged her. “So are mine,” he mumbled.

Rose stared at him. “We have to go and find them. I saw the whole thing happen,” she said.

Canis rolled his eyes. “No, I saw you asleep, mumbling about where your parents were,” he argued.

“No! I was awake and watching the whole thing happen!” she tried to lie again.

Canis muttered and turned, heading into the forest.

Rose *shifted*. “Wait, I lied... I didn’t see it all happen. I was asleep,” she admitted, lowering her head and sighing.

She bounded over to his side. “I’m coming with you,” she said determinedly.

“No you’re not, Rose,” Canis argued.

Rose shook her head. “I’ve lost my parents too!” she whined.

“But mine are the Alphas!” he growled.

“So? My parents are just as important!” she spat back.

Canis growled and stiffened, turning and bounding away. “Whatever!” he growled.

Rose whined, feeling lonely. “I’m coming, I want to find my parents,” she grumbled, padding after him.

She found Canis sitting at the top of the hill, shivering with both fear and anger. “Why? Why now?” She heard him muttering in frustration to himself.

Rose stopped short, shuffling then padding over to his side. “Canis. Everything will be alright,” she tried to reassure him.

He turned his head away. “You don’t know what I’m feeling right now,” he said, trying to sound sharp and possibly make her go away.

Rose shook her head in frustration and turned, curling up on the wet grass and staring in the direction of the harsh, cruel smell that held her parents. She shivered and fell asleep, her dreams haunted with images of her parents screaming and howling for help, and the cold cruel laughter of something large, dark and mysterious.

Canis looked at her, feeling sorry for himself and ashamed of his rude remarks about her parents and her tagging along. He lowered his head, suddenly feeling only half his size, and slunk over to her. He curled up beside her, sharing his warmth, and fell asleep.

Chapter Three – Let it Begin

The morning came harshly. There was barely any wind to cool them off. It was the middle of summer, the hottest season of the year.

Rose woke, stretching and shaking out her thick fur. She nudged her friend. “Canis. Wake up. We have to start moving or else we won’t find our parents,” she mumbled sleepily. She yawned, revealing rows of sharp pointed teeth.

Canis groaned and rolled over. “Just a few more minutes,” he mumbled, but got to his paws anyway.

He stretched like a cat, stomach brushing the ground, hind legs lifting his rear into the air. His tail shook violently, stretching and stopping the cramps from happening. He stood, blinking sleepily. “Okay. Let the journey begin,” he muttered half-heartedly.

Rose smirked, bemused. She turned, tail flicking his jaw. “Come on sleepy head. Let’s move,” she said, already starting to pad after the stale scent of her parents. “We need to hurry, or else the scent will leave and we’ll have no choice but to go by our instincts. We’re not as good at scenting as the wolves.”

Canis shook his head. “Yeah, yeah. Let’s go,” he said, padding off in front of her. He inhaled over and over again, following whatever scent of his parents that he could find.

Rose also shook her head, muttering about his show off actions. She followed, guessing he could follow the trail better than she could.

Canis closed his eyes as he walked, padding cockily towards a hill.

“Canis! Watch out!” Rose warned.

But Canis had already flung himself down, tumbling and rolling till he got to the bottom.

Rose stared down worriedly. She whined. “Canis! Are you hurt?” she cried.

A muffled voice returned her call. “I’m fine,” it yelled.

Canis paced back and forth, inhaling. He stared up at Rose. “Well, there’s a heavier scent down here, and it holds our parents’ scent too.” he called. “Come on ‘fraidy cat! Get down here and check it out! It’s amazing! The trip down’s not too painful... all you do is roll!” he taunted teasingly.

Rose scowled. “Fine!” she growled, and bounded down the hill, without rolling.

“Clutz!” she giggled, when she reached the bottom.

Canis rolled his eyes. “Females!” he muttered under his breath.

Rose nudged him sharply. “I heard that!”

Canis shrugged. “So? Let’s move!” he challenged, darting away, then picking up speed.

Rose rolled her eyes, following after him.

Canis stopped short, an unimaginably wonderful scent filling his nostrils. “Whoa,” he whispered, stumbling off the trail.

Rose shifted nervously. “Canis, let’s go, we need to keep moving before the scent fails on us again,” she whined.

Canis stiffened, growing crazed with the scent. “No, this is our home now,” he growled. He sighed thoughtfully. “It’s so pretty here,” he stated, padding dazedly in a different direction.

Rose nipped his neck fur. “No! Let’s go! I can’t smell a thing except the stale smell of our parents!” she snapped.

Canis ignored the nip, crumbling to the floor. The ground rumbled with heavy pawsteps. There was something growling and making whimpering noises.

Rose hid, terrified. The noise came closer. The skunk bent over the crumbled body of Canis and grinned wickedly. It lifted the little Wolfses and bounded away, leaving Rose in the clearing. She stared in disbelief.

“No!” Rose howled, and ran after the skunk.

Canis laid dazed and glassy-eyed in the skunk’s den. He moaned, the sweet smelling scent being replaced by a horrid, nasty smell. Canis jerked, making his carrier jump. It dropped the little Wolfses and he tried to run. But before he could get away the skunk growled, raised a paw and landed it heavily on his back.

Canis moaned, jerking and pulling. “Leave me alone!” he howled angrily.

Rose heard Cain’s petrified howl. She dove towards the sound, muscles pulsing with fear for his life. She exploded out of the bushes, leaping as high as she possibly could. Rose landed on the skunk’s hind leg, and from there scrambled up to its head. She growled, snapping her teeth into the skunk’s huge ear.

“Leave him alone!” Rose snarled.

The skunk yelped in pain, swinging its head, making Rose roll onto its back. She continued to bite and pull at its fur, until finally it let Canis go. It slunk away, staring back at them in anger and frustration.

Canis panted, shaking out his fur. “I’m going to have nightmares of this day,” he muttered quietly.

“Aw, cheer up. You’re safe is what counts,” Rose reminded him.

“Yeah. I guess,” Canis mumbled. He shrugged. “Well, let’s go search for the scent,” he said, bounding into the bushes.

Chapter Four – Danger Awaits

They followed the trail, growls of protest coming from their stomachs. They had gone days without food.

Rose mumbled, collapsing on the grass, licking her cracked paws.

Canis nudged her. “C’mon, you gotta get up. The scent is much stronger here,” he said. He continued to pad around, even after Rose refused to come. But he too soon collapsed from hunger. He whined and whined and whined until he fell asleep.

Deep in the snowy forests near the northern Arctic where the two Wolves had collapsed, a small group of Lynxes were prowling.

Crank snickered wickedly. “Two starving Wolves, all alone and vulnerable,” he whispered. “Lunch,” he grinned.

He crawled forward, but Fella nudged him. “They’re just kids. Maybe we should pester them to tell us why their here,” he suggested.

Crank bridled, but nodded stiffly. “Yeah, I guess we could,” he muttered. He shot a glance at the cowering Lynxes huddling near his mother. “You – Lynk – go out and fetch them,” he snapped.

Lynk nodded fearfully. “Y-yes sir,” he mumbled, scrambling over.

Crank snapped his teeth inches from the stump of Lynk’s tail. Lynk jumped and bounded out of the trees, approaching the Wolves.

Canis jumped at the sight of the Lynxes. He scrambled over to Rose, nudging her sharply.

“R-Rose, there’s a L-Lynxes over t-there,” he stuttered fearfully. He cowered behind her.

“You big goof, it’s just a youngling,” she teased.

Canis glared. “But it can still kill us,” he growled.

Rose shrugged. “Yeah, right,” she scoffed.

Lynk stared at them, feeling just as terrified as Canis. “You have to come with me,” he said as strongly as he could.

Canis looked at Rose, “Should we do it?” he mumbled.

Rose shrugged. “It couldn’t hurt. He could be helping us,” she said.

She nodded at Lynk. “Okay, we’ll come,” she said, getting up and padding up to him. She stood at least an inch taller than the young Lynxes.

Lynk nodded miserably, turning and heading into the trees. He yelped and scrambled away.

“Wonder where he’s going,” Canis mumbled to Rose, as they took off after him.

Lynk picked up speed, feeling scared and vulnerable with the nearly adult Wolfes following close behind him. He scrambled over a small hill, sliding down it to the bottom where he made his home.

“Stay here. I will be on the hill,” he said in his quiet voice, before bounded up the next hill. At the top he stopped and stared down at something on the far side.

Canis sat, shivering with the cold. He didn’t have any winter fur, because it was summer where he lived. Rose curled up, dozing slightly. Canis shivered, curling up against her, searching for warmth.

Lynk returned, looking dazed and miserable. “They’re coming,” he promised.

Canis raised his head. “Who’s coming?” he asked, worried.

Lynk glanced up the hill. “My family,” he mumbled.

Canis froze. “Trapper!” he howled, baring his teeth.

Rose nipped him. “Stop your bickering. He won’t hurt us,” she growled.

Canis stared untrustingly at Lynk, unsure.

The sound of growling and bickering came from the hill, and everyone raised their head to watch.

Lynk cowered under the ruthless gaze of Crank, the biggest of the group, and obviously the leader too. Lynk whined, crawling into a hole and hiding there until Crank left him alone.

Crank glared at the Wolfes. “Measly mutts,” he grumbled, stalking away.

Fella looked at him, before turning to the Wolfes. “Hello. Would you like something to eat?” he asked.

Rose nodded. “Yes, please.” She smiled.

Canis nodded jerkily, scared.

As Fella disappeared to hunt, Lilli padded over and nudged Canis. “Don’t be afraid, we won’t hurt you. Just don’t get Crank mad... he’ll bite,” she said.

Canis growled. “Oh, so that’s the big old Lynxes,” he muttered. “Crank,” he said, testing the word. He nodded at Lilli. “I won’t,” he promised.

Lilli nodded thankfully, then left to go to sleep.

Lynk crawled out of his hole and sat beside Rose, staring at the ground in shame. “All I ever wanted was to show them I’m brave,” he whined.

Canis ignored him and fell asleep, only to be woken again by a sharp nudge from Rose and the warm smell of fresh meat. Canis drooled over the smell, staring at the snowshoe hares. He nodded thankfully toward Fella then dug in, the meat warming and filling his stomach. Rose smiled, finishing her mice.

Crank growled, shuffling his paws. “Now go on! Get!” he spat at the Wolfses when they had finished their meal. “No one wants you here! All you’re doing is gobbling down our food!” he spat, throwing snow in every direction with his rage.

Canis and Rose got up and bounded off, staring down at Crank, a look of hurt in their eyes. Lilli and Fella stared after them in sympathy, then crawled into their dens and fell asleep.

Lynk hid from Crank, then followed Canis and Rose when the old bully turned away.

Chapter Five – Lynk

Canis and Rose padded through the snow, noses to the ground, trying to find the scent of their parents.

“Ugh! All I can smell is the snowshoe hare that I had!” Canis whined.

Rose whined, too. “I know. All I smell are those plump mice,” she mumbled. “I can’t believe we’ve lost the scent!” she cried.

They fell silent, useless for the first time. Canis stared at Rose, ready to start a fight. “You’re the problem! You led us in the wrong direction!” he started, pinning his ears to his head and rising onto his back legs, standing and looking slightly more weird.

Rose stared in disbelief. “I’m the problem!? Your the own who allowed me to lead!” she yelled, rising along with him.

Lynk sat back, too scared of getting hit to stop their bickering.

Canis scowled angrily. “All you could smell was those stupid mice!” He snarled. “So you followed the nicest scent!”

Lynk stared at the bickering friends, hiding behind a rock and huddling nervously. Canis and Rose glanced at Lynk then continued bickering.

“Well, you could have told me I was heading in the wrong direction!” Rose protested, baring her teeth and lunging in his direction with her paws.

“How was I to know?” he retorted sharply.

Lynk tired of the never ending fight. He padded into the middle, growling and trying to catch their attention. Canis and Rose dived out of the way, yelping.

“Jeez man!” Canis yelled. “You look like that wretched skunk!”

Rose stood, blinking in confusion. “Your not supposed to be here,” she thought quietly. “No! Your not. You never asked, and you snuck up on us!” she said, trying to think up something to say to pester Lynk into talking.

Lynk mumbled sheepishly. “Well. I thought that I could follow you on your journey. It seemed interesting.”

Canis tilted his head. “But we don’t even know your name,” he said.

“Yeah. And how do you know we were on a journey?” Rose pressed.

Canis stared at him suspiciously. “And why are you wanting to come along?” he whispered.

Lynk stared at the ground. “I knew because you wouldn’t be here if you didn’t have something important to do,” he mumbled. “And I want to come because I want to show Crank and my parents that I am strong enough to do things for myself!”

Canis looked at Rose with a look of *Duh, that’s obvious Rose*. Rose then shot him a look of *Hey, don’t tease*. Canis rolled his eyes and shuffled away.

“Well I guess you can come. But please tell us your name,” She said sweetly.

Lynk smiled gratefully and blurted out his name. “Lynk.”

Rose smiled. “Welcome, Lynk,” she said.

Chapter Six – The ‘Monster’

The air felt eerily silent, with only the soft scrunching sounds of the three travelling through the snow. Rose lifted her head from the snow, letting out a loud sneeze and shivering. “It’s so cold here,” she whispered.

Lynk shifted. “It’s getting much warmer here now. Soon all the snow will melt in this area,” he said.

Rose muttered, “I wish it’d melt faster,” then quickened her pace.

Lynk shrugged. “She sure is pretty,” he sighed dreamily.

Canis rolled his eyes. “Yeah, pretty,” he scoffed.

Lynk looked at him confused, but paced after Rose. Canis padded slower behind him, tired and hungry yet again.

Lynk called out to Rose. "I'll go get some food, I'm the only one who can in the snow mounds." Then he disappeared to find something good to eat.

Canis padded up to Rose, sitting and shoving his face in the snow, cooling off his hot face. "We need to find somewhere to rest," he mumbled from the snow.

"I know," Rose sighed. "My legs feel like lead," she said, lying down next to him.

Rose lifted her head abruptly, staring into the whiteness in the distance. "Whoa, what is that?" she asked, continuing to watch it.

Canis lifted his face from the snow and stared into the distance. "I don't see anything Dreamer," he said, using her old nickname from when she was a pup.

Rose rolled her eyes. "I can see a little one over there," she said, getting up, making Canis yell. "Oh quit complaining," she spat back.

She loped towards the object, then blinked, amazed. "Canis! Come look quick!" she cried, shuffling around excitedly.

Canis muttered irritably and padded over. His fur frizzed out at the sight of the thing, and he dove into the trees, howling at the top of his voice.

"Canis pipe down! You'll wake it up!" Rose scolded.

"B-but it's a monster!" he whispered furiously.

"You said that about Lynk," she reminded him.

"But this thing's huge!" he growled.

Lynk padded back to the area where he had last seen the two Wolfses and sighed. He looked up from his snowhares and brightened, breaking into a fast paced walk.

Suddenly Lynk flung the kills all over the place and scrambled into the bushes, hissing and growling in fear. "Holy mother of Lynxses!" he hissed, huddling and watching the creature. "What is that thing?"

Canis stared at him. "How are we supposed to know?" he growled.

Rose hit Canis's muzzle with her paw. "Quit bickering," she growled back. She huddled over the curled up snoring creature. "I think it's a baby polar bear," she whispered, sniffing it.

Lynk stiffened. "Polar bears eat us Lynxses," he growled.

Rose looked at him. "But this one's just a baby!" she protested.

Lynk muttered. "Whatever."

Rose smiled and huddled over the polar bear, which was now waking up.

It yawned, it's lovely blue eyes watching Rose. It moved its mouth, trying to make the growling and moaning noises that all bears do, but no sound came out.

"Wonder why it can't speak," muttered Canis.

Rose glared at him. "He's mute. I can tell," she hissed. Rose looked at the baby. "Maybe his parents are missing."

As if Rose had said the magic words, the polar bear started crying, only silently. It cried until its fur became wet.

"Shh! Stop. We'll find your parents, wherever they are," Rose mumbled.

The bear smiled, somehow understanding what she meant. Either that or it felt calmed by her voice.

Canis's jaw dropped open. Lynk mimicked him.

"WHAT?!" they both yelled at the same time.

"We are not taking that giant monster with us!" Canis protested.

"It'll eat us alive!" Lynk yowled.

Chapter Seven – The Seer

Canis and Lynk padded gloomily behind Rose, with the little bear cub hopping and dancing and biting at the flurries.

Canis glanced at Lynk. "Why did we bring that thing with us?" he whispered.

Rose glared at them. "Leave her alone," she snapped.

Lynk lifted his head. "Oh so it's a girl now huh?" he mocked sarcastically.

Rose rolled her eyes. "Whatever," She muttered, lifting her head at the sound of crunching snow. "Hey look! There's a group of polar bears over there!" she cried, bounding forward, leaving the others covered in snow.

The baby polar bear lifted its head from the snow and cried out in silent glee. It bounded over to its parents.

Lynk stopped, then widened his eyes. "Rose no! Get out of there! There are humans out there that are going to shoot those polar bears! And they might hit you!" he yowled, fur rising on end.

Rose dove out of the way of the scuffling bears, and sat down in front of Lynk and staring at the humans. Rose froze, the little girl had looked right at her. "She's looking at us," she whispered.

Canis glanced in her direction. "Oh Great Lupus, she is!" he howled.

Lynk bounded towards her, desperate. “Lynk! Don’t!” Canis and Rose both shouted.

Lynk stopped. “Her brother is aiming to shoot the baby!” he cried, falling onto the girl’s shoe, scrambling to get her attention.

The little girl looked down. “Oh! It’s a little kitty!” she cried, reaching down to grab Lynk.

“No! I’m not a little kitty! You have to stop your brother from shooting the little baby polar bear!” he yowled at the top of his voice.

The little girl jumped. “Oh, it talks.” she mumbled in awe.

“Shh! Get your brother to not shoot! He’s going to kill the little bear!” Lynk pleaded once more.

The girl nodded quickly. “Brother! Brother!” she screamed.

“What do you want now Little Muckluck?” he grumbled.

Little Muckluck pulled at his coat. “Don’t shoot! That little bear is Mr. Kitty’s friend!” she cried. “See? Mr. Kitty will tell you.” she said, holding up Lynk.

Lynk struggled in her grip, trying to *blend*. But couldn’t. He mumbled.

“DON’T SHOOT THE BABY!” he yowled once more. He coughed from yelling so much to be heard.

The brother dropped his gun and ran, yelling and screaming as though he’d been shot himself.

Little Muckluck smiled proudly. “See? He’s not going to be shooting polar bears for a long time!” she said.

Lynk smiled broadly. “Thank you,” he said.

Little Muckluck put him down and he *blended*, but she still saw him.

“Bye bye, Mr. Kitty!” she said, waving.

Lynk ran as hard as his muscles could carry him and rejoined with the group.

Chapter Eight – The White Tiger

They hurried against the winds, though it was obvious it was a lot warmer. Most of the snow was melting in the area they were heading towards. They’d found the scent of their parents and were rushing to save them. Many things had happened this time, and all they wanted to do was return home and keep calm until the next time.

Rose stopped, freezing in her seat. “There they are,” she whispered.

“We’ve found them,” Canis mumbled.

Lynk whimpered. “But there’s a huge white tiger guarding them,” he whined.

Rose and Canis looked at him.

“No. I’m not going to keep him busy,” Lynk whined.

Canis and Rose crouched, prowling against the snow toward their parents. Lynk scowled, walking idly in front of the massive white tiger. The tiger glared at him.

“What you want pest?” the tiger snarled. “Claw no like pests. He like them for dinner.” He growled hungrily.

Lynk bared his teeth. “Catch me.” he hissed, walking off.

Claw got up and ran after him. Lynk darted out of the way, running faster and faster.

Canis and Rose darted to their parents, half starved and nearly gone. “Mom! Dad!” they whined, nuzzling them.

Their parents woke up, smiling. “You came,” they whispered.

“Let’s get out of here before Lynk really does become dinner!” Canis and Rose whined, nudging their parents to their feet.

All around them they saw healthy bodies of Lynxes. Most of them looked like Lynk.

Lynk dove into the trees, hiding.

“Claw will find pests, pest.” the Tiger growled.

Lynk cowered, fear filling his limbs.

Canis and Rose led all the Lynxes and their parents out of the area, to the safety of the trees.

“Stay here,” they ordered, then dove back down, being followed by all the Lynxes.

“We will help free Lynk, he is our family,” the Lynxes promised.

Canis and Rose looked at each other, but nodded. “Hurry,” they whined.

They dove back into the area, bounding headfirst into Claw. “You’re the pest!” Canis taunted.

“Claw is no pest,” he growled, swinging his paw and missing.

Rose leapt on top of him, sinking. She stared at Claw, then looked at the ice. She leapt off of him, then taunted him, leading him towards the ice. “Pest!” she cried.

Claw’s massive paw hit Rose across the ice, cracking it. She moaned, but got up, scrambling backwards. Claw was too angered to realize he had bounded after her onto breaking ice. Rose slid onto the hard ground.

The ice broke, with Claw falling through, sinking and never seeming to return to the surface.

“All *Ses*! Back to the trees at the top of the mountain! Go, go, go!” Rose commanded, racing up the hill and into the trees. She collapsed and watched the rest scramble up, and fall in exhaustion beside her.

As the last *Ses* returned, Claw broke from the water, roaring in anger. He scrambled ashore and left the area, most likely never to be seen again. Hopefully.

The *Ses* yowled and cheered in victory, leaping and pawing at the air, trying to raise the mood. “We did it! We defeated the White Tiger!” they cried.

Rose looked at them seriously. “But the journey is not over yet. We have not returned home,” she said, then laid down, allowing the fatigue envelope her.

Canis stood over the *Ses* that night, staring into the stars. “I will return home, my pack, and I will lead you willingly and with care,” he whispered. Then he sighed, staring into the icy water, praying to return home to lead his new pack with his new mate. Rose.

The End