

Four Corners by Celia B.

Chapter 1

Stories

Nala woke up to the sound of muffled sobs. She immediately knew who it was. She jumped out of bed as fast as she could, grabbed her pale blue robe and wrapped it around herself. She went down the hall turned right and knocked on the first door. She did not need to knock but she had been taught it was polite. She eased the door open to see little Minnie on the floor crying. Nala walked over and put her arm around the small child's shoulder.

"What's wrong Minnie?" Nala asked with tenderness in her voice. The shaking child did not answer, to startled from the recent dream. "Was it another nightmare?" Minnie nodded her head and nestled her head into her knees. Nala picked up the child and laid her on her bed. Minnie curled up in a ball and fell back quickly to sleep. While Minnie was sleeping, Nala stayed and made sure that she was sound asleep.

Nala left silently and went to the kitchens. There she found Kurtz, a small pale boy, eating strawberry jam from the jar. The innocent looking boy knew he had been caught. He pulled his hand out of the jam, washed up in the basin and hung his head while Nala walked him back to his room. This was almost every morning at the Romeve Manner. Nala rushed around making sure all the children were in bed and all of them were asleep. Then she made her way to the older children, which were only a couple of years older than Nala, to talk and gossip. Aria was the eldest followed by the twins Joan and Jane then came William then Nala, Kurtz and Minnie. But today was a different day. It wasn't a day Nala would forget, but one that would live in her memories forever.

Nala made her way out of the front lawn, past the little garden, and through the willow forest. She had gotten dressed in her usual boots and pants. She loved to come and read away to any animal that would listen. She was about halfway through the tale of "Snow White" when something caught her eye. She looked up to see a boy around sixteen years of age staring at her. Nala set her book down and looked back at the boy. She could see his eyes were tinted green and his hair was chocolate brown. He was tall and lanky leaning against the birch tree.

The so-called boy was looking at this young woman. Her eyes were bright blue and her hair was a brilliant shade of red. He was listening to this girl read for the past week. The stories that she told were engaging and thrilling. Each time she would come with new stories he just wanted to hear more. He nodded towards the book, indicating that she should continue reading. She apparently got the message, nodded back to him and picked up the book. She continued reading in that silky voice she had. The boy closed his eyes and imagined the young maiden waking up to seven short men with long white beards. When Nala had finished reading, she tucked the book back into her satchel and walked towards the boy. He continued leaning on the tree trunk hands in pockets.

"I really like when you read." The young man said, trying not to indicate anything. He had a sweet British accent that sounded like blueberries. Nala nodded her head and turned away to walk off.

"Will you be here tomorrow?" He asked stepping away from the tree and walking towards her.

Nala made her face in a pondering position. Then she spoke, "Maybe. At least I now know that not only the deer are hearing me read."

The boy smirked. "Okay. My name's Thomas by the way."

"Nala," she smiled a little. "So maybe I'll see you tomorrow."

"Maybe," Thomas said with another smirk. He turned away and headed east towards the small house.

Nala headed west without another glance back. She kicked the mud out of her boots and set them by the fireplace. She then went up to her room and changed into the sunflower yellow work dress she had. She wasn't a maid but she wasn't a part of the Romeve family either. She was adopted when she was only a week old, but the Romeves still treated her as if she were their own. She had been most grateful and as such she repaid them with all the help she could offer. Nala went downstairs to see the whole family gathered at the dining room table. Only Jacks Romeve was missing.

"Good morning Mrs. Romeve," Nala said taking her place next to Minnie at the far end of the table.

"Good morning dear," she said, not looking up from her paper. Alice had always told Nala to call her mother but Nala didn't feel comfortable saying it. Alice had warned Jacks that if they told Nala that she was adopted then she would feel different from the rest, and Nala had felt different from the rest of the children. It wasn't a bad different it was, for Alice at least, a wonderful difference. Nala would take care of the children and she would help the other maids, but Alice didn't like the idea of one of the children doing any house work but Nala insisted. She helped Minnie in the early mornings, and Kurtz at night. She would listen to Aria complain about school when Alice was having a bad day, and she would make sure Kurtz didn't eat the preserves while unattended. Nala was truly part of the family, but Alice knew she didn't feel like it. Nala had flaming red hair while all the other children had brown. She was a lot quieter and had a very large imagination which separated her from the older children. They thought she was odd going out in the mornings to read. They said she was dropped on her head when she was a young child.

Nala however knew that her mother had been a seer. They had to have an imagination to be able to tell the future and give prophecies. Of course, no one new that Nala knew her real mother. She had heard Mr. Romeve talking on his phone to the minister. He was talking about how Nala and how her bringing up was going. They were talking about Rayla and her last words.

“I was there. She didn’t say who, but she did say when. ‘In sixteen years from now.’ That’s in two years, nine months, and seventeen days! Yes I’ve been counting down. Ever since I was given Nala I’ve been counting down. I can’t help it, George. It’s just too nerve racking to think about.”

Nala had been doing research on Rayla Shamplee ever since. She had gone into the parts of the library that even Mr. Romeve almost never went in. She had found a book of spells, seers and prophecies. She learned that her mother was one of the most famous people in the world, but when she got to the last part of the book about her last days the pages were ripped out. Nala wanted to confront Mr. Romeve about it but she didn’t want him becoming angry at her for doing research and that she would not be allowed in the library and Nala couldn’t have that. The library was her only home that she felt comfortable in, besides the woods. She could lose all her worries in a good book and learn new things. At first the other children invited Nala to come and play with them, but at the end of the day she would be left in the library. As years went past, she had read almost every book in the library twice. It started to get old, and she watched the children run through the fields. She thought they didn’t like her because they didn’t invite her but the truth was that the children asked so many times that they lost hope that Nala would ever be fun.

“So Nala, what did you read to the deer today?” Alice asked after the minutes of tense silence.

“Snow White, ma’am, but the deer weren’t the only ones who heard me.” Nala replied not looking up from her eggs and bacon. Alice was used to Nala saying this. She would tell her that the birds and the foxes listened too, but her reply caught her off guard. “There was a boy watching and listening to me.”

“Oh?”

“Yes, he had been watching me for a few weeks now. I don’t really mind though. I’m glad to know that someone is listening.”

Alice did not know any boys who lived in the area. “Did he say his name, dear?”

“He said it was Thomas. Please excuse me; I have to help Joan and Jane stop fighting about their dresses.” Nala got up and put her dishes on the silver trolley and walked off.

Alice looked at her children gawk at the girl who never talked to anyone about anything. Alice got up and reached for her phone. She dialed her husband’s phone number and spoke very quickly. “Jacks, she met someone.”

Jacks stood up at his desk and almost flipped over the chair, making everyone in the office look at him. “What!? Where!?”

“She said she met a boy named Thomas in the woods.”

Jacks actually started laughing. “Oh Alice, don’t you worry. That is only the farm boy that lives up the hill to the east of our estate. Frank, Lisa, Kit, and Thomas Evans live there. They used to work in

our gardens but Frank got a better job working in the bank. I still see him every now and then. They are a good family and maybe it's okay for Nala to make a friend. She's been trapped in that library for as long as I can remember. The children don't invite her to play with them anymore. Let her be for now and we'll see how things go in the end. Perhaps he might be part of the prophecy."

"Jacks, stop with the prophecy please. It's getting very annoying hearing you talk about nothing but that stupid prophecy. It's been almost sixteen years since you were the only one that heard that. I know that there was video surveillance of the prophecy, but I still believe that you hit your head."

"Alice dear, I did not hit my head!" the heads in the office turned. "I know what I heard. You saw the footage on that night. We were talking and she gave her prophecy, then she fell and the cameras gave out. They flickered and went out. That's strange and that never happens, especially in the Susan."

"Well, it may have been her prophecy because they started to give out when she started. I still say you hit your head. Now I have to go. Minnie's crying again and Nala's at work with the twins." Alice hung up the phone and quickly walked to the window to see a boy standing outside on the edge of the woods.

Chapter 2

Baskets

Thomas watched from the safety of the forest but left once Alice saw him from the second floor. He trudged away not looking back. After about five minutes of non-stop jogging he came to a fairly sized brick house with a small garage on the side of it. A mud road with tire tracks leading from the house to the city that was miles away. He went inside to see his mother on the sofa with a cup of coffee in one hand and a book in the other. She glanced up from her book to see Thomas but resumed reading. Thomas grabbed his bag and went downstairs to change into his school uniform. He then quickly made his way outside and started for the school that was north east of the house.

Thomas had to hurry because he spent a little more time in the forest than usual. After a ten minute walk he could see it. The grand building that held almost thirty thousand students was a year-round school that was just starting. Thomas groaned at the thought of having to deal with Aaron Feildings for the fourth year in a row. Arron and Thomas had been enemies ever since they started going to school with each other when they were twelve. But Thomas couldn't risk having any more fights with Aaron or anyone else. His father had worked so hard in getting him this spot in this school and if he was expelled that was it. Thomas wouldn't be able to go to school any more. The city was too far away for more than one trip and there wasn't another school close by. The Evans had just been too lucky to get that particular house.

In an instant Thomas saw him and his flaming red hair. He was talking with his friends Luke and James Goodwin and they instantly saw him that tall, lanky boy with the tattered uniform. They made eye contact for a second then walked off to their first classes. Thomas couldn't help but think that there had been something off about Aaron, like he was closer than an enemy. He shuttered at the thought of Aaron and him ever being friends. They hated each other from grade one since the teacher had put them next to each other. They just didn't get along and they never would. That was a fact that everyone in school knew. Every single teacher, student, and even class pet knew that the Evans and Feildings had this hate toward each other and no one could change that.

By the end of the first day, Evans was covered in food while Feildings looked the same as he came. The story behind this was that Evans had taken Feildings seat in lunch and Aaron shoved Thomas but Thomas didn't do anything so Aaron took advantage of that. He started flicking peas until it was a full on food fight but without Evans taking any charge. This was odd, even for Aaron's liking. Thomas usually took a stand to this kind of behavior but today he just seemed out of it. Thomas walked home trudging in the fresh new snow.

He looked first at the mansion that lived next to, then his eyes shifted to the moving figure by the garden. He instantly knew it was Nala. Her hair was bright against the white blanket. He smiled to himself, turned around and went back inside.

"How was school?" his mother asked not looking up from her book.

"Fine," he muttered dropping his bag onto the floor.

"Speak up or you're never going to fit in," Lisa snapped spilling some of the residue in her cup onto her book. "Now go wash up. We're having company over."

"Who might that be?"

"The Wilfrids are coming to have dinner with us."

Thomas groaned. "Why is it always the Wilfrids?"

His mother glared at him from under her spectacles. "Why are you always like this? You can't have everything to yourself you know and don't worry," Lisa said turning back to her book. "It's only Martha and Paul, not their children."

Thomas sighed with relief. He didn't like small children. They always bothered him for some reason. He didn't know why but they just did. It wasn't the screaming or running around or even the constant reminder that he would never live up to his parents' potential. It was just something else but he couldn't place his finger on it. Then like the conversation never happened there was a knock at the door.

Lisa looked at her wristwatch. "They shouldn't be here for another hour." She got up and opened the door to see three children holding a basket of fruit. Two of them were around the age of five and had dark brown hair and the third was around fourteen with bright red hair.

"We brought this to you from our mummy," the little girl said quivering at the coldness.

"Very good Minnie," the older girl said. She smiled at Minnie and bent down nudged the boy in the side.

He grunted but finally said, "From the Romeves to the Evans." He looked back at the older girl. She nodded and the two children handed the basket to Lisa.

"Why thank you very much Minnie and Kurtz." She stood back up and looked at the older girl. "And you must be the Nala I've heard so much about." This caught Thomas' attention. He turned around to see the three Romeves smiling brightly at his mother and he didn't know why.

"Why yes I am," Nala said slightly pink at the cold.

"I wondered when I would get to meet you," Lisa said putting out her hand. "Jacks had told our family about you but we've never seen you out and about."

Nala went slightly pinker due to embarrassment. "Well you see about that, I don't like going outside very much. I'm not really an outside kind of girl."

"That makes sense." Lisa smiled. "Thomas doesn't like to go outside very much either."

"Does he now," Nala said raising one of her eyebrows. "Well I wouldn't blame him. This time of year to be out is the worst. Now we have to get going. We want to make it home before dark and we still have baskets to deliver."

"Alright then love. Get home safe!" Lisa shut the door, handed the basket to Thomas and went back to her book on the sofa. "Put that on the table why don't ya?" Her bothered tone was back again.

"Okay," Thomas said not looking back. He glanced at his mother before slipping out the backdoor. He hopped the fence and saw the three people walking down the street. He hurried after them, and tapped Nala's shoulder.

She turned around and slightly smiled. "Hello Thomas, what are you doing?"

"Why did you lie to my mother?"

She looked a bit taken aback and then her face had a look of realization. "About going outside?"

"Yeah," he said nodding his head.

"I just don't like going outside to do anything but read. Now if you'll excuse us we have two more houses to do."

“But why though? Why don’t you like going outside?”

“Why didn’t you tell your mother that you liked going outside?” She said rounding on him.

“Well-I –um...” he stuttered.

“That’s what I thought, now leave me alone.” She turned to Minnie and Kurtz and started walking off to the Merrell’s house. Thomas rolled his eyes, thought she was being unreasonable you know. Things that men do when their mad or when they don’t get what they want. Then he walked home muttering to himself.