

You can't fight nature

Elise Hunter

In a forest woven with silver mist and dreaming trees, where morning dew clung to every blade, lived a peacock named Vin. His feathers were a hymn of colour, blues deep as oceans and greens bright as new leaves. He danced not to impress, but because he could not help it, his joy poured out of him like spring water.

Vin was a quiet wonder, full of strange songs and soft laughter. The forest knew his name, though he never shouted it.

Watching from the shadows, half-hidden beneath bramble and thorn, was a vixen named Fen.

She was all fire and shadow, her fur the colour of burning leaves, her eyes sharp as thorns. Fen had long learned to move like silence, to trust her instinct more than her longing. But the first time she saw Vin, dancing beneath a spill of moonlight, her hunger fell silent.

He was not prey. He was poetry.

She watched for nights without approaching, spellbound. Each time he spun, his feathers rippled like wind on water, and something deep in Fen's chest stirred, something she didn't have a name for. Not yet.

Then, one twilight, Vin turned. He had always known she was there.

"I see you, fox," he said, and there was no fear in his voice.

Fen stepped out into the clearing, cautious. "Then why haven't you run?"

Vin tilted his head. "Because not all who watch are waiting to strike."

And so, it began.

At dusk, when the forest sighed into sleep, they met. Vin brought stories and laughter and colours Fen had no words for. Fen brought silence, and listening, and the rare, rough-edged question. Though her hunger still stirred sometimes, it was not the same. Not the sharp hunger of the body, but a softer ache of the spirit.

Fen did not tell Vin how her dreams changed, how she saw feathers instead of fur, how his voice echoed through her sleep like wind chimes. She did not say that when she caught his scent on the breeze, her breath caught too.

But Vin knew. Of course he knew. And still, he stayed.

The forest changed around them. Leaves turned gold, then brittle. Stars arrived earlier, stayed longer. Still, they met, night after night, as if time itself bent to their rhythm.

And Fen began to believe that maybe, just maybe, what she was didn't matter as much as who she was becoming.

But the forest does not forget its truths.

One evening, the sky was bruised purple, and the moon wore a cold crown. Fen came to the clearing with her ribs aching, her belly hollow. No rabbit. No squirrel. Only the thrum of blood in her ears and the scent of Vin, warm and alive.

He was already dancing, turning slowly, feathers casting light like fallen stars.

"I dreamed of you last night," he said. "I was flying, and you were running beside me, trying to catch the wind."

Fen swallowed, throat dry. “Did I?”

Vin tilted his head, thoughtful. “No. You stopped running. You just... watched. Like you do now.”

He stepped closer. “What do you see when you look at me?”

Fen’s breath caught. She wanted to say: the sky, the sea, everything I never knew I could want. Instead, all she said was, “Something I wish I could keep.”

He stepped closer, feathers brushing against her shoulder like wind through grass.

“You’re quiet tonight.”

Fen lowered her eyes. “I’m... tired.”

But what she meant was I’m starving.

Vin nodded, unafraid. “Then rest with me.”

He turned, long neck curved in gentle trust, chest exposed. Fen felt her body tighten, the coil of instinct returning, sharp and sudden.

She didn’t want this.

She wanted to love him. She did love him.

But something older than love stirred in her blood. Something that remembered teeth before it remembered tenderness.

And that was the moment it happened.

Not out of cruelty, or malice. Not out of choice. Something primal woke in Fen. Something buried beneath the gentleness she had worn like borrowed skin. Her muscles moved before her mind did, and her jaw snapped forward, before her love could shout wait.

It was instinct.

A flash of teeth. The crack of bone. The song stopped.

Silence bloomed.

Feathers spiralled through the air like ash after a fire. Vin lay still, his brilliance dimmed, a smear of colour against the cold earth. Fen stood over him, chest heaving, heart screaming, but the forest heard only the quiet.

She had loved him. And still, she had eaten him.

When the blood dried and the stars faded, Fen did not leave. She gathered Vin's feathers, those holy, radiant things, and laid them at the roots of the tree where they had met.

She did not speak. What words could matter now?

Days turned to weeks. Winter whispered through the trees. Fen did not hunt. She did not howl. She only returned each night to the place where Vin had danced, pressing her nose to the feathers, hoping for the scent of forgiveness.

Sometimes, when the wind was kind, it carried a song that did not belong to birds. A note that curled at the edge of sorrow. And Fen, broken beneath the weight of both memory and instinct, would look up and swear, just for a breath, that she saw him.

Not whole. Not real. But still dancing.

Still beautiful.

Still out of reach.