

MICROFICTION

The Boy Between Moonlight

written by
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The moon found Elias Rowan halfway home.

It silvered Blackpine Forest in narrow strips, catching on wet branches and the pale gravel of the old logging road. Elias had walked this way as a child, before his mother died and his father took him away. He remembered the creek. The leaning cedar. The place where Kaia Blackwood once dared him to climb a tree too tall for either of them.

He did not remember the forest going silent.

“Elias.”

Kaia stepped from between the firs.

Blood streaked one cheek. More darkened her torn jacket. Her breathing came hard, but her eyes were steady on him.

“Run.”

He took one step toward her. “You’re hurt.”

“Run.”

A second voice drifted from behind him.

“He should.”

Elias turned.

Seraphine Vale stood in the road as if the darkness had placed her there. At school she was immaculate, distant,

impossible to read. Tonight her eyes seemed almost luminous.

Kaia's expression changed.

Not fear.

Recognition.

Hatred.

"You," Kaia said.

Seraphine smiled without warmth. "Still alive, Blackwood?"

A growl rolled through the trees.

The sound was too deep to belong to any ordinary animal.

Elias froze.

Something enormous emerged from the forest: a wolf nearly as tall as a horse, black fur shining beneath the moon.

Kaia moved in front of Elias.

Seraphine moved at the same instant.

For one strange heartbeat, the two girls who clearly despised each other stood together between him and the beast.

Then the wolf looked at Elias.

Its ears lowered.

Its massive body sank toward the earth.

One foreleg folded.

Then the other.

The creature bowed.

Kaia whispered, “No.”

Seraphine’s face lost every trace of amusement.

Elias stared at the kneeling monster.

The wolf stared back as if it had been waiting for him longer than he had been alive.

And somewhere beneath Elias’s skin, his heartbeat answered.

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