

Sleeping Valley

Chapter 2

When Lumi wakes up, she hears gentle windchimes ringing outside. Golden sunlight shines through the open window beside the couch she slept on. Sounds of Haven making breakfast, Lumi smells pancakes, can be heard from the kitchen. Lumi sits up and stretches, wiping sleep from her eyes before glancing at her plush cow.

She startles from her daze when she remembers the dream she had last night. *Was that actually real? Are we in danger?* She lightly chews on her fluffy tail anxiously.

“Good mrow-ning! How did you sleep? I had the weirdest dream last night,” Haven walks in holding a plate of pancakes, wearing her signature red sweater.

“What did you dream about?” Lumi quickly asks.

“I think there was a magical creature or something. I must’ve eaten too much before bed,” Haven sleepily giggles, placing the plate on the coffee table.

“Did that creature tell you anything important?”

“Umm... There was something about destruction and chaos. That’s not too out of the ordinary for my dreams, though.”

“Haven, last night I had a dream warning me about the destruction of the Sleeping Valley as a *whole*! You may have had the same dream!” Lumi urgently tells Haven, still half asleep.

“Wow, that actually sounds pretty similar to mine,” Haven says with a mouth full of pancake.

“I’m serious, we may be some of the only animals able to save our home.”
I’m glad I’m not the only one, but she has to understand the severity of this threat.

Haven’s expression becomes serious as she thinks for a moment, brushing her fingers through her black and orange hair. “How about we wake up a little, eat breakfast, and then we can talk about this more?”

Lumi exhales a held breath before resting her head on Haven’s shoulder, “Okay.”

The two felines sit side by side on the couch as they eat breakfast. An open window lets the late summer breeze waft into the living room. Lumi smiles at the morning sunlight painting bright streaks across Haven’s hair. Her golden gaze meets Lumi’s, and she winks.

“What’re you looking at, handsome?” Haven flirts.

“Just enjoying the view,” Lumi blushes at her partner before remembering the night before. Her expression becomes serious as she takes a breath. “Haven, can we talk about the dream now?”

Haven nods, “I’m starting to remember mine clearer now. This orange, winged creature was warning me of something.”

“Do you remember what they said?”

“Like you mentioned earlier, they said the Overgrown Oak and the valley as a whole are in danger. I’m used to having stressful dreams, but this one felt...” Haven thinks for a moment. “It felt *real*. I’m really not one to believe in prophecies from dreams, but this feels different somehow.”

Lumi gently holds Haven’s paw. “I was visited by a celestial who warned me, as well.”

“Why are they warning us, not someone in power?” Haven begins to lightly claw at her long tail.

Lumi sighs, “I don’t know... I saw *what* could possibly happen, but I don’t know *when*. Why would someone ever want to destroy the peace we have now?”

Haven thinks for a moment. “I heard that in the past, there were different groups of species that went to war. Maybe whoever’s in charge of this attack wants power from the divide between us.”

"What are we able to do, though? We have no powers or weapons to stop them," Lumi worries, *Why would anyone want war just for power? We are dealing with a serious threat.*

"Well, I'm sure the celestials will help us, and we'll talk to the leaders of the villages."

"Yes, we have to warn them as soon as possible!" When Lumi suddenly stands up, Haven smiles.

"Don't forget to change out of your PJ's, mighty warrior."

As Lumi and Haven leave the safety of their home in the hill, some late summer leaves fall from the maple trees above. Lumi wears a backpack over her purple sweater while Haven has a bag slung over her shoulder.

"Which village do we talk to first?" Haven asks Lumi, turning to her as sunlight filters through her tinted glasses.

"I think Soft Wood, the one closest to the Overgrown Oak. They'll be the most vulnerable, right?" The brown and cream cat answers as she walks on the pebbled path leading the way through the forest. Birds fly and sweetly sing, unaware of the impending threat they may face.

Haven nods, "We should go to the oak; the leaders of each village usually meet in the center." They walk over the bridge as the river gently ripples. *I can't imagine all of this being destroyed*, Lumi stops for a moment to run a paw over the smooth wooden frame. Haven puts her arm over Lumi's shoulder and squeezes it.

"I know this is serious, but we will be okay," she gently purrs. Lumi turns to her, seeing the concern and worry peeking through the cracks of her soft smile.

They watch the sunlight shining on the river before Lumi murmurs, "It's okay if you're scared, too."

Haven's smile slightly cracks, she laughs shakily. "Don't worry about me, now let's go save the valley!" She turns back to the path, running down the bridge to the other side. Lumi's ears droop as she watches her lover make confident strides with a trembling tail.

At the Overgrown Oak, animals chat over coffee about their morning plans. A ram refines the stories in the tree's bark with a chisel, while a bear sells fresh vegetables from a cart outside.

Lumi enters the oak, pushing away any nerves she had the day before with the weight of her mission. Smooth wood lines the walls of the

grand, hollow tree; warm, glowing lanterns hang from the ceiling. Spiral staircases and water-powered elevators are on either side. Looking up, Lumi gazes at the many levels to the tree that circle the perimeter. Falcons swoop above while otters swim in the river paths below which link to different rooms. The library, full of books old and new, warmly sits next to the shelter, full of healers ready to help any animal in need.

In the center of the tree is the heart of its power, a giant glowing orb full of the magic that heals its inhabitants and the villages surrounding it. Haven stands near the orb and smiles at the warmth emanating from it. As a kitten, Lumi had been taught by her parents that magical, celestial beings created it along with the Overgrown Oak for there to be peace between all species. *The celestials have done so much for the Sleeping Valley, and now I'm going to help them... I hope speaking with the village leaders will help.*

Behind the orb is a large door to the meeting room where the leaders of each village come together to make decisions. Haven puts an ear up to the door.

"Um— Haven, should we really be listening to a private meeting...?"
Lumi flicks her tail anxiously, she frets to herself; *We don't even know if*

they'll believe us! How do we know if this is real? All we did was have similar dreams... Maybe we should just go home—

Haven's long tail shoots up, "Wait, I think I hear Basil! And River, too?" Lumi's ears perk up, "Really?" *What if we're not the only ones who know about this, and it's also our friends!* She breathes a sigh of relief at the thought. Haven swings open the door, forgetting to knock.

The meeting room is adorned with blossoming vines growing on the walls. A round wooden stump makes a large table in the center, and light casts through a window behind it.

Sitting on chairs around it are their friends, River and Basil, along with a rabbit and snow leopard. They all turn as they are interrupted mid-conversation with surprise. River and Basil immediately light up.

"Oh— Lumi, Haven! There's something incredibly important we need to tell you," River, a gray fox wearing a buttoned white shirt and black pants, rushes over to them with a worried expression.

"Is it about the safety of the Sleeping Valley and Overgrown Oak?" Lumi asks quickly before they can say any more.

"Um, yes, actually... Did you receive a dream, too?" Their large ears perk up.

“Yeah, we were coming here to talk to the leaders about it! Also, sorry for interrupting,” Haven sheepishly chuckles.

“Thank the stars we’re not the only ones!” Basil barks with relief as he wags his tail.

“Is this meeting going to be interrupted any more...?” The snow leopard, *that’s Echo, the leader of Frozen Pine*, growls slightly with annoyance.

River clears their throat, sitting back down to compose themselves. “It shouldn’t be interrupted any longer. I apologize, madam. We’re very appreciative of your time, but this... this is *urgent*. Now we have even more proof of this threat, and two extra sets of paws to help!”

“Even if the valley is in danger, what exactly are we supposed to do? If we do not know what we are facing, how are we supposed to stop it?” The rabbit, *I think he’s Olive, Soft Wood’s leader*, asks.

“We may not have a lot of information yet, but we should soon from the celestials. Even if we don’t know the specifics of the threat, we should prepare, right?” Lumi chimes in, suddenly feeling hot as the leaders turn to her.

Echo sighs as she swishes her long, flowing tail. “Your friends have told us that this threat will require animals to learn how to harness magic. This has not happened in years, how could it possibly happen *now*?”

“We’ll need some time to learn that from the celestials,” Haven answers through gritted teeth. Lumi notices the black and orange cat’s tail flicking tensely as she tries to retain her composure.

She begins to wonder; *Wait– aren’t there five villages in the valley? We’re only speaking to two of them, and they don’t even trust us!* She lightly sighs, *Can I really blame them, though...?*

The snow leopard stands from her seat, adjusting her black jacket. “I apologize, but we should get going now. Olive and I plan to speak with the other leaders soon, and about more *pressing* matters.”

Olive lightly thumps his foot with impatience as he stands, “Yes, we thank you for your time.” His hazel eyes soften slightly, “Let me know if you receive more concrete information.”

“Wait–” Basil pleads as the two leaders exit the meeting room, closing the large door behind them. He turns to his friends, whimpering as his ears droop.

Lumi puts a paw on the wolfdog’s shoulder comfortingly, “At least Olive seems a little open to hearing us out. Maybe the other leaders will, as

well.” Haven growls, lightly clawing at the table. Lumi thinks to herself, *Do we really know what we’re doing? Do I?*

River thoughtfully gazes out the window, watching as animals pass in and out of the entrance to the oak. The gray fox perks up suddenly.

“Wait, the celestials mentioned us needing to learn magic, right?” The others nod to them. “Maybe we can’t seek the leaders for guidance now, but instead someone who can teach us.”

“How are we going to find someone?” Basil doubts. “Like Echo said, animals harnessing magic has not happened for years.”

“Well, that we *know* of,” Haven chimes in. Lumi perks up in interest, “That’s true! It’s possible there are animals that know magic, we just haven’t heard about it. Where would we be able to learn about that?”

“The library!” River chirps, wagging their fluffy tail. “I’m sure there’s books about mortal mages there.”

Haven giggles warmly, “Of course *you* suggest the library.”

Lumi lightly nudges her in the shoulder, “Hey, the library’s really nice!” Basil jumps up from his seat, cane in paw. “What are you waiting for, then? Let’s try!”

The four leave the meeting room together, hope sparking in them like the warm glow of the oak's magic heart.