

Leila Chapter 47

Duke had been determined not to go far.

Dogs were still barking in the distance, so he stayed in the water to try to prevent them tracking him. He'd emptied his old walking boots three times. It was getting colder.

He sat and listened. There was something or someone moving. Close by.

He dared not call out. He stared into the pitch blackness. He listened. He smelled the air. Anything to try to work out what it was that was so close. Was it a deer? Was it a dog? Surely not, or he would have been found by now.

There it was again. Shuffling feet, perhaps on the bank or just above the side of the stream. He tried to see again, but did not dare move quickly in case it was the police. For the same reason, the torch was out of the question.

He crept through the shallows on his hands and knees and slumped onto the bank of the little stream. Somewhere close he thought he could hear something breathe. A nervous panting. Not a dog, it was more subtle than that. This creature was holding itself back. Close enough to hear, but not to see.

He moved up into the shadow of one of the biggest trees in the forest. Standing up slowly, he leaned against it, his hands feeling their way through the snake-like scales of its bark.

Ivy intertwined and grasped at his fingers.