

“The Orphan”
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I turn in circles around my prey, a little baby hare, admiring my handiwork.
A few months ago, I wouldn't have been able to catch something this size!
I can't wait for Mother to come home from her hunt and see my first actual catch.
Big Brother stumbles over to see what I've been so excited about, and I jump
onto him (his punishment for coming so late).
We wrestle on the sun-dappled forest ground, our spotted fur coats shining under
the light.
After untangling himself from our wrestling match, Big Brother strides over to my
prey.
He watches it for a second, then turns his head, and gives me a slight nod of
approval. I smile proudly, and am about to start wrestling again-
When I hear a boom that shakes the birds out of trees, and a deafening roar.
Big Brother and I share a glance, horrified.
I run towards the source of the noise, and Big Brother follows close behind.
I reach a clearing, and what I see makes me dizzy.
Mother is on the ground, hurt.
There is something lodged in her stomach that is making a gash in her
underbelly drip a deep red.
Her eyes meet mine, and she gives me the “Stay away” look she gives when
she's hunting something dangerous.
Except, as I learn later, this time she's the one being hunted.
A few seconds later, Mother's eyes close, her chest stills, and my heart
plummets.
I am an orphan.