

*three unsent letters*

Max Ford

Ballad,

I don't know why you're still here. I've given you every opportunity to just stop in one of these towns, fit yourself in the community, make a life for yourself. You'd do great in any of them. But for some reason... you've stayed with me.

I can't... take care of you. Not really. I hope you've realized that. It may be my job, but I'm not that good at hunting. It was hard enough fending for myself, and I don't know how long I can keep this up. For your sake and mine, I hope you find somewhere you can be, and be happy. Just let me live my life in the grass between the trees.

I don't know why I'm writing this. It's not like I want you to read it. Maybe if I do, I can convince myself to tell you.

Saul

Ballad,

Why am I still waiting for you to leave? You should have found some place to live by now. Over the past few weeks, we've stopped in maybe a dozen or so towns. You made friends with some farmer or craftsman or innkeeper in every last one. When we work in exchange for food or a night's sleep, there are jobs you really seem to enjoy- caring for people's crops, minor repairs, even just moving bags of grain or other supplies from one place to another. Are you even thinking about where you want to end up? You could so easily just start your life anywhere. Why don't you just do it already?

Why am I still waiting for you to leave? Am I so desperate to be alone again? It's not like having you with me has been bad. Having another voice has been... nice. Comforting. But... I don't know if I want to get used to that. Someday soon, you'll probably find some town you fit great into, and finally we'll part ways, leaving me behind like the other towns. And then the forest trails will be quiet again. No voice but my own. I don't know if I'm ready for that.

Saul

Ballad,

I don't know if you've noticed, but I've been out of it the past week or so. I hope you noticed. I hope you didn't. I don't want you to feel you need to stay with me. I'll... I'll be fine. I was fine before, and I'll be fine again.

There isn't anything special about me that should be making you stay. I just happened to be the first person to find you in the woods that day. Any traveller or wandering salesman could have been the one to save you, I was just the closest.

And now I'm just the closest when you wake up in the morning, so you happen to follow me out.

I don't want to get my hopes up that you staying with me for this long means anything. You just haven't found somewhere or... someone better, so you stay with me. Floating from one town to the next, not yet belonging anywhere. For you I hope there is a yet. I hope you find a place to call home, a house, a bed, a family. But I... I don't want to hope that that could be me.

I don't know why I'm writing this. It's not like I want you to read it. Maybe if I do, I can convince myself to tell you.

Saul