

Friday Snippet: From

MOONROADS

written by Holly
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This picks up about where the last snippet left off. The stuff that was in the last snippet has been totally rewritten. But still. Genna and her best friend Catri being chased by human-haters.

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We ran down the darkening passage, with them behind us, and they began to run, too. The corridor grew darker yet, and beautiful Arrienda became rough around the edges, where worked stone was replaced by living rock, where the ever-glowing moon-lights gave way to intermittent, smoking torches, and where smoothly graded floors ceded their place to uneven ground.

Faint light gave way to darkness—and the passageway became the raw rock walls of a crevasse in a true cave, a place where things dwelt that never saw the light, and never needed to. Blind and groping things. Creatures who could hear the faintest breath, the beating of a heart, the rush of blood through veins.

We pressed ourselves against damp sandstone and did not move. I could hear the trickle of water, but I could not begin to guess whether it was far away or nearby. I could not hear any footsteps, any voices, anything other than the two of us

breathing. We had left nightlings and taandu monsters and nightworlders behind us. Where we had come, they had not followed.

Pursuing that thought, of course, I tripped over a second and more worrisome one. Perhaps we had moved into a danger so great it frightened them away. This is the sort of thing I think when I am in the dark, and lost. I'm never much of a comfort to myself.

"Genna?" Catri whispered. "Something's dripping on my head. And the back of my neck."

We couldn't see anything. I wore a crystal on a chain around my neck—a gift Yarri, the same nightling friend we had been trying to meet, had given me—and if I tapped it, clear pale light would illuminate the area around us.

If I tapped it, anything that still searched for us would find us.

If I didn't tap it, of course we might discover only as we were devoured that the liquid dripping down Catri's back was not another cut tree root, but drool from a monster crouching on a ledge above us.

I am no comfort to myself.

I pulled the light from beneath my sweater and whispered, "Get ready to run." I tapped the light.

Water trickled down the rock wall against which Catri leaned. No monster. No taandu root. No one ran screaming at us, brandishing a club or a sword. The darkness beyond our circle of light stayed dark, the silence around us stayed silent, and there we were. Two girls alone beyond the Arrienda Deeps, where no breeze blew, where nothing skittered or whispered or moved, where I could see no sign that anything had ever walked where we walked.

Catri's eyes were huge. "Where are we?"

I gave her the look we reserve for people who ask stupid questions.

"I was just hoping you might have some idea," she said.

We started back the way we had come, trudging, listening for the sounds of pursuers.

"Why wouldn't they have followed us here?" Catri asked. She walked at my side so she could stay within our circle of light. This created terrifying shadows that ran along the rough stone beside her.

I shrugged. "Because it's dark?"

"There were torches. They could have brought them. They would have caught us easily."

"Because they didn't really want us?"

She shook her head.

Behind us, a growling voice said, "I suspect it was because they have the sense to be afraid of me."

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