BLACKBERRY

Written by

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EXT. FOREST - PATH - DAY

A puddle splashes as four kids run through the woods. ARLO (9) leads the group across a log above a flowing river.

DANA (9) follows close behind with a large, rolled up piece of paper.

Behind her is CARTER (9), who is picking up a variety of different sticks and rocks as they make their way down a small cliff. *

The three larger kids jump off with ease, continuing down the path. WILL (6) stumbles forward, tripping off of the ledge and landing face first in the dust. *

WILL
Oof!

He quickly picks himself up, **dusting off his gray hoodie and running forward.** * *

EXT. FOREST - CLEARING - DAY

The four kids arrive at a small clearing in the forest. Arlo turns to face his friends.

Will finally catches up with them.

ARLO
Okay. I hereby announce this land as The Village! AKA Kid's Clearing, AKA Arlo Land. We've got four hours to build our base, bring back resources, and prepare our defenses from raiders.

CARTER
Raiders?

ARLO
Yes, Carter. Raiders.
(beat)
Like that guy!

Arlo points to a dragonfly that lands on a leaf right outside of the clearing.

ARLO (CONT'D)
If he wants in, he's gonna have to go through me.

Arlo steps forward and puffs out of his chest.

ARLO (CONT'D)
Dana, you're the builder. Maybe get started on a campfire? Carter, keep collecting sticks, my man. And I'll be look out. Cool? Disperse!

Carter and Dana quickly move away, ready to fulfill their tasks.

Will clears his throat. *

Arlo looks down at the small boy.

WILL
What should I do? I wanna play too. *

ARLO
Will, this isn't a game. *
(dramatic) *
It's survival. *

Will crosses his arms. *

WILL *
Mom said you have to let me play. *

ARLO *
Okay, okay. Just- uhm. *

Arlo looks around. *

ARLO (CONT'D)
Oh! Help Carter collect some sticks. *

Carter returns to the clearing with rocks and sticks.

CARTER
They're not just "some" sticks. This is serious. They need to have the perfect amount of-

ARLO
Okay, okay. Uhm- Then... help Dana make the base instead.

Dana places her final rock, completing her "campfire".

DANA
What? No, no. I have a vision.

Dana unrolls her sheet of paper, revealing a simple colored-pencil drawing of a blueprint. *

DANA (CONT'D)
And it's like super complicated. My mom is in construction, so I know what I'm talking about. He should just help you stand guard... **Or leave.**

ARLO
No, my mom said we all have to come back home together when we're done. And he can't stand guard with me. He doesn't have the guts.

WILL
I've got the guts!

ARLO
No. No, you don't. Dude, maybe you should just go play by yourself for a bit. Somewhere else. Somewhere that's anywhere but here.

WILL
But-

Will is cut off by Arlo**, who hands him a stick and a granola bar.**

ARLO
Here's a stick for defense, a granola bar for protein, and a good pat on the back for luck.

Arlo pats Will on the back before turning him around, nudging him out of the clearing.

ARLO (CONT'D)
Have fun!

Will **turns back to look at the older kids before sadly** disappear**ing** into the woods.

Arlo turns back to his friends.

ARLO (CONT'D)
Well, that's taken care of.

EXT. FOREST - **PATH - DAY**

Will **sits on a large rock. His hood is up, revealing his raccoon hoodie. The hood provides him with pointy gray ears.**

Will uses the stick to draw in the sand. He stares at the stick-figure drawing of him with comedically large muscles.

WILL
(To self, remorsefully)
I've got the guts.

Will gasps as a chatter is heard in the bushes. The leaves begin to rustle. Dropping the stick, Will hides poorly behind the rock.

Will peers out to see a large raccoon emerge from the bushes, dragging a bag of unopened chips.

Will watches as the raccoon attempts to open the bag, swinging it around. Two more raccoons step out of the bushes, watching their friend's failed attempt.

WILL (CONT'D)
Oh.

WILL sneaks out from behind the rock.

The raccoons turn to him and hiss before looking up at his hoodie ears. Their eyes sparkle in awe at the biggest raccoon they've ever seen.

WILL (CONT'D)
Uh- do you need some help?

The raccoons look at one another as Will falls to his knees in front of them. He grabs the bag and pops it open.

Will takes a chip out of the bag, holding it towards the raccoons. The largest raccoon takes the chip and swallows it.

Before Will can take out another one, the raccoons tear the bag away from him and swiftly eat the remaining chips.

Once the bag is left empty, the raccoons begin to sniff Will, licking the remaining chip dust off of his fingers.

WILL (CONT'D)
Hey! That tickles.

EXT. FOREST - CLEARING - **MOMENTS LATER**

The older kids **are still completing their tasks, speaking with one another.**

DANA
We should just start sneaking out of the house. Then he can't follow us.

CARTER
Arlo, what if he gets hurt?

ARLO
I dunno, then maybe it'll toughen him up a little.

CARTER
But **if he gets hurt, then** we'll get in trouble.

ARLO
Dude, relax. I doubt he went far. Watch.

Arlo shouts to the trees.

ARLO (CONT'D)
Will!

No response.

ARLO (CONT'D)
Will!

Still no response.

ARLO (CONT'D)
Will!

DANA
I don't think he can hear you.

ARLO
He's probably just super invested in his game of one.

Carter and Dana exchange an unconvincing look.

ARLO (CONT'D)
Ugh, fine. I'll get him.

Arlo walks off.

EXT. FOREST - **PATH - MOMENTS LATER**

Will **walks behind the raccoons as they lead him down the path. He speaks with the raccoon closest to him.**

WILL
I'm thinking your name would have an edge to it, ya know. Like Gunther. Or Savage.

The raccoon continues walking, not engaging. Will stares at it, still following close behind.

WILL (CONT'D)
You ARE a dude, right?

EXT. FOREST - BELOW TREE - CONTINUOUS

The raccoons stop walking just below a large tree.

The raccoons turn to Will and direct him towards the tree. One of them nudges Will forward.

WILL
You want me to climb? Oh. Okay.

Will begins to climb the tree before he reaches the highest branch.

EXT. FOREST - BRANCH - CONTINUOUS

WILL
Are you guys coming?

The raccoons chatter, pointing next to Will.

Will turns to a bird's nest that's sitting on the branch. Inside is a single blue egg.

EXT. FOREST - BELOW TREE - CONTINUOUS

Will hops down from the tree, holding the egg carefully.

The raccoons crowd around him, cheering. Will smiles softly.

ARLO
Will?

Will looks up as Arlo emerges from the bushes. The raccoons rush behind Will for cover.

ARLO (CONT'D)
Dude, why would you walk off so far? You gotta be smarter- Whoa.

Arlo looks down at the raccoons.

ARLO (CONT'D)
Will, come here. Slowly.

Will looks at the raccoons.

WILL
You don't have to be scared of them. They're friendly.

ARLO
Will, I'm not playing around, man.

WILL
These are my friends. And unlike you, they LIKE having me around. And so, I'm going to play with them instead.

Arlo looks dejected as Will turns his back on him, facing the raccoons.

WILL (CONT'D)
What do you guys wanna play now?

The raccoons' faces turn from sweet to ravenous as their teeth turn sharp. They attempt to reach up for the egg. Will pulls away in surprise.

WILL (CONT'D)
Ah!

The raccoons slowly approach Will as he paces backwards towards Arlo.

WILL (CONT'D)
Wha-? You guys weren't planning on...

Will looks down at the egg and then back up at the raccoons.

WILL (CONT'D)
It's just a baby.

The raccoons attempt to jump for the egg, one of them scratching Will in the process.

WILL (CONT'D)
Ow!

The raccoons hiss.

Arlo quickly grabs Will's arm, pulling him away.

ARLO
Run!

EXT. FOREST - PATH - CONTINUOUS

Arlo and Will run down the path, finding themselves back at the cliff from before.

Arlo jumps off the ledge with ease, quickly helping Will down. Will trips but lands on his feet, still fleeing. The raccoons follow suit.

EXT. FOREST - DEAD END - CONTINUOUS

Arlo and Will turn a corner, faced with the side of a steep cliff - a dead end.

The two boys turn around as the raccoons approach them, snarling.

Will clutches the egg tightly, speaking to it.

WILL
(softly)
Don’t worry, I won’t let anything happen to you.

Arlo watches as Will holds the egg closer.

Arlo looks down before putting himself between Will and the wild raccoons.

He dramatically puffs out his chest.

ARLO
If you want him, you’re gonna have to go through me!

The raccoons hiss loudly, causing Arlo to scream and stumble backwards.

Will gasps.

WILL
Arlo, I got an idea.

ARLO
Will, no. Stay behind me.

WILL
Trust me.

Arlo looks at him, unconvinced. He cautiously steps to the side.

The raccoons begin to charge at Will before the granola bar is held high in the air, stopping them in their tracks.

Will holds the egg with one hand and the granola bar above his head with the other. As he moves it around, the raccoon's eyes follow it.

WILL (CONT'D)
You want it?

Will throws the granola bar to the side and into the bushes.

The raccoons stumble over each other, chasing after it and hissing at one another.

Arlo returns to Will's side.

EXT. FOREST - BELOW TREE - DAY

Arlo waits at the bottom of the tree as Will carefully returns the egg.

Will hops down. The two boys stand in silence for a bit.

Arlo kicks the dust.

ARLO
Ya know, what you did was... cool.

Will smiles up at Arlo.

WILL
Yeah. You too. Thanks for trying to protect me. Emphasis on 'try'.

ARLO
Hey, there were three of them. A real man knows when he's been bested.

Will chuckles.

ARLO (CONT'D)
And uh... If you want, you can play with me and my friends-- if you want. Two defenders, ya know.

WILL
Like your partner!

Arlo and Will begin to walk away from the tree. *

ARLO *
I was gonna say more like my *
sidekick or second-in-command type *
thing, but we don't have to focus *
on labels. *

As the boys disappear into the trees, a small bird lands at *
the nest as a baby bird's head pokes out. *

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