**The Furies of Westeros (ASOIAF/Codex Alera Crossover)**

**Prologue**

**Will**

The forest was silent and Will didn’t like this. There was roughly one hour before sundown, the weather was clear and the furies of the Haunted Forest, air, earth, water and wood, should have been stirred by their progression. Nine days north of the Wall, any trace of civilisation was long gone and they were in the wilderness, where the Great Furies reigned and the wildling clans waited only one opportunity to ambush them.

The forest should not have been silent, not with black brothers present and certainly not if these bastards of raiders had used this snow path.

Murmuring encouragements to Robin, the wood fury he had named for his brother, Will probed the trees of the area in search of their targets. He should have...tasted was not the right word, but with furies language was an imperfect thing, yes tasted the presence of the wildlings and provoked some agitation in their surroundings. It was in many ways a risky thing, since the prey they were pursuing had long learned how to evade the attention of the Night’s Watch furycrafters.

But for the first time in eight years serving his oaths, the silence persisted. Under his warm black clothes, Will shivered. Furies muted and all his instincts were telling him something wrong was happening...this mission had not started well and it had little chance to improve in the next heartbeats.

On his right, Gared didn’t seem to have a better chance with his earthcrafting. Will knew the old ranger and his big earth fury Garrick were experts in tracking everything which could run or crawl. Given the small vibrations created in a circle around his feet, his efforts were not successful.

“Nothing,” grumbled the earthcrafter in the grave accent he always used when he spoke New Furian. “I don’t feel any wildlings near us.” Meaning their prey was gaining on them or they were on the wrong trail all along. Even here in the middle of the Haunted Forest, Gared could feel a rabbit a league away.

“Speak Andalian, damn it!” the commander of their ranging said in their back. Will went still as he tried to ignore the feelings of distaste the third member of his party inspired him. “What have you found?”

Both rangers turned to face the Knight they had been imposed by Lord Commander Mormont. Will’s face was neutral, perhaps not enough to fool a watercrafter but a good try. Gared didn’t make the effort and glared at the highborn. There was reason to be angry. For days and days Gared had told the youngster his Andalian was awful. How could it be otherwise when Gared had spent all his life on the Wall? Northerners and Night’s Watch brothers learned early to speak Furian or another variant of the language. That way, you could call the Northern Legions in support when the enemy came. The only persons speaking Andalian were the recruits from the South and one in two stopped speaking it in one year or close.

And as if that wasn’t enough, the noble accompanying them had been taught the eastern dialect of the language, not the low Andalian he and his family had spoken in the Riverlands before he was caught and sent north.

“Nothing,” repeated Gared in an Andalian so awful one word in ten was recognisable. “Nothing...no wildlings...freaking...forest...furies...silent...turn back...night...”

The suggestions of the oldest ranger of their group were wasted like they always were. Waymar Royce stood in a nonchalant manner before smiling like he had heard a good joke.

Black armour and black fur-lined cloak, the Royce Knight was looking impressive...Gared had joked a lot about his perfect appearance around the bonfires this year. Waymar looked like an officer and those attracted the enemies like honey attracted the bears.

“Are you afraid of the night, Gared?” Words or not, the mockery was clear. “Be happy you’re not in the Legions, the Centurions would have put you on night patrols until you stopped trembling!”

Oh, by the Old Gods and their Great Furies, another Legion reference. When was this young highborn going to understand he wasn’t in the Second Vale Legion anymore? This was the Night’s Watch and the rangers patrolled Beyond-the-Wall. They had not hundreds of furycrafters able to create earthquakes, attack two thousand feet above the ground, drown an entire army in a river or burn entire towns. Like Will, scores of men had been given the choice between death and the black, a sure death or a long wait at the edge of the realms of men.

But try to explain that to the third son of a Duke.

“Will, tell him I don’t like how the furies are silent,” Gared had reverted back to Furian, leaving him once again to play the middle-man for the language problems. “It is getting cold, we won’t see anything in the night and we should have already seen these wildlings if they are nearby. Let’s go back to the Wall. These wildlings aren’t going to kill any of our brothers if they flee northwards.” His hands covered in black gloves were opened in a supplicant position to press the Valeman.

Will translated the sentences of Gared, insisting on the first point and urging the grey-eyed swordsman to abandon the pursuit. Somehow he knew before the noble opened the mouth to answer that he wasted his breath.

“We continue,” the highborn said after a few breaths in the cold air. “Wildlings won’t be able to escape, not under my watch. And once we will see them, it will be too late. I don’t need light to kill them, I am a Knight Ferrous!”

Great Furies, Will was happy there were not that many highborn on the Wall. This was always an unpleasant experience to meet and speak with them. They were so fond of their ancestors and their titles. I am a Knight, blah, blah, blah. My family own these lands, blah, blah, blah. By furies and by blood, it was their duty to rule over the Seven Kingdoms or something like that.

The first time he had seen a highborn was the day the Knights Aeris had dragged him in front of Duke Mallister to give him the decision between the rope and the black. What a joyous day this had been.

“We continue,” the woodcrafter told Gared, who had already guessed his advice had been ignored. A few words in Furian were uttered, questioning Royce’s parentage and forbidden practises with goats.

“He’s a Knight Ferrous...” whispered Will to reassure himself.

“And the only metal in a hundred leagues are the swords I and this highborn idiot have,” reminded him Gared as he mounted his little horse the Watch regularly bought from the Western steadholders coming twice per year at Queenscrown. “I don’t care how powerful he is, he’s just a metalcrafter. Without his sword, he is useless.”

Yes, without it. Will was really curious to know how Gared could disarm their ranging commander. Waymar could intercept arrows like the ones in Will’s quiver with his sword like they were nothing. And he had seen enough ‘training lessons’ of Thorne in the courtyard of Castle Black to know a metalcrafter could stab you in a hundred different fashions. Royce could kill Will, Gared and three scores of wildlings on his own and go drink a pint of ale on his two legs afterwards.

Of course without them he would never find his way in the Haunted Forrest. Take his choice of horse, really. A powerful black steed, great and majestic, perfect for celebrations, open battle and scouting in the plains but a nightmare in forest conditions. The little furry companions of Gared and Will were far more adapted for ranging. And at the first sign of winter the black horse would die. Southern animals could not survive the ice storms of Beyond-the-Wall for long.

Night fell on the forest and contrary to Royce’s words, they saw no sign of wildlings. The furies were still muted and the instinct and the impressions given by Robin were not able to explain it. After several turn of hourglasses, they had to rest the horses and light their lamp-furies. Waymar glared at the darkness like it had insulted him. By the disgusted looks he threw around, maybe the highborn thought he was able to force the day back if he glared hard in every direction. The great dark horse and its two smaller cousins were allowed to drink their content in a small river meandering between the trees and the snow while the three rangers ate their daily ration of dry meat and hard bread. It was not a large meal, but it felt like a King’s banquet for his empty stomach.

The darkness was oppressing. He used his woodcraft ability in every direction and suddenly on the opposite direction of the horses, the trees were shaken by moves by things which were not animal.

“Gared, on your left,” He called the veteran earthcrafter before addressing their commander in Andalian. “Ser Waymar, enemy coming!”

“There are seven of them,” spoke Gared after stomping the ground hard once. From experience, Will knew this was all the earthcraft the old ranger would need to assess the enemy’s strength.

“I feel their weapons,” hissed the Vale Knight. “They are in bronze...but there is something wrong. They are empty, void. I have never felt furies like this...”

 The former poacher of the Riverlands tried not to show his fear as the noble of all people acknowledging there was something unnatural at work here. It was too late, for good or ill. He seized his bow from its leather protection in his back and notched an arrow.

“They are coming!”

The alert shout was just uttered the figures emerged out of the shadows in running. Will let his fury’s dexterity and senses flow into him and shot like he was on the training ground. One arrow, two arrows, three arrows, four arrows were taken from the quiver and shot at the wildlings before they had time to close to close quarters. At this distance, Will could hardly miss them. His two targets received one arrow in each eye and collapsed. A bulky savage rushed at Gared and tried to remove his head with a big double axe.

The old ranger punched him in the belly. Strengthened by an earth fury, the strike was powerful and the wildling screamed in pain. Will had no sympathy for these cannibals and raiders, but he winced when the noise of bones cracking went to his ears. The brute stayed still for a heartbeat before falling on his back and laying still. The second one tried an attack on Gared’s left while he was distracted. The sword of the Night’s Watch separated the head in two.

As for Royce, the Knight Ferrous was amusing himself with his opponents. Will did not know exactly how to describe it. It was part a dance, part a fight. The sword of the Vale highborn was going so fast his eyes were not able to follow. The three wildlings who had decided to attack the metalcrafter had absolutely no chance to win this duel. Strike after strike, Royce removed arms and punished their errors by new wounds before thrusting his sword in their chests.

“Pathetic,” Will heard him whisper under his breath. The manner he looked at the corpses made him far older and serious than his twenty-four name days. “There are farmers at Runestone who fight better than them...”

Will ignored the next grumbles. Of course they were going to fight better in the South, they had furycrafting! But the attitude of the wildling surprised him. They had charged head-first in the melee without trying an ambush first. This was not how experienced raiders attacked when they were on familiar forests.

Will knelt next to the first wildling he had killed with his arrows. This was an old man, his beard had largely turned to grey and he was missing several teeth. And he was wounded to the side. It had happened today, the injury was too fresh for it to be otherwise. But Will shots had not missed and Gared and Waymar had not had time to deal with this warrior.

It could only mean one thing. The wildlings had not wanted to fight them; they had stumbled on their ranging by sheer bad luck. They were hunted. And if the arm wound of the second wildling he had killed were any indication, the hunters were not far behind.

“Gared, these wildlings were wounded and fleeing!”

The old ranger grunted and looked at his own victims before answering.

“Will, I don’t feel anything...”

“Move!”

The exclamation from Waymar Royce saved his life. The bronze sword cleaved through the air instead of his flesh as he threw himself on the ground. For an instant Will didn’t understand. They had killed the wildlings. They had not felt more enemies. How?

Then he saw the very wildlings they had killed rising.

It was impossible. Dead people were dead. This was one of the few things furycraft was powerless to counter. The Stranger or the Old Gods took the human souls and guided them to the Seven Heavens or the Seven Hells depending on your religion, but everybody agreed death was a disease no healer had ever found the cure.

“For King Robert Baratheon!” snarled Waymar. The cold was more intense and the corpses shrieked in a horrible sound but the young Knight Ferrous didn’t retreat. His sword a whirlwind of death, the ranging commander tore apart the dead. There was no groan of pain and the arrows he shot the dead with seemed to have no effect. And the force behind Gared blows threw them a few feet away, they were coming back.

The corpses of the wildlings were not exactly slower than they had been when they were alive but they had not the reflex to protect themselves anymore. Legs, arms, heads, Waymar Royce cut them apart. Twice, Will believed he was going to die and twice Waymar was there, stopping the abomination from ending him.

The archer had no idea how long the battle lasted. A few seconds or an eternity, he didn’t know. But he had never felt more afraid in his life. Not when he had seen his brother taken by the Mallister Knights and hanged for poaching a deer. But once the last wight finally stopped moving after their metalcrafter had reduced it to a bloody paste on the ground, he felt like cheering.

And yet it was cold and he shivered.

“What in the Seven Hells was that?” The highborn ranger’s face was very pale. Will supposed his own visage must be like this too.

Gared spat on the ground and spoke one name.

“Wights,” It was a Furian word, but the pronunciation was the same in Andalian, perhaps because the South had not these sorts of dark tales to make them frighten in the dark.

“Wights are just legends,” protested Waymar but his tone lacked assurance.

A powerful blast of wind crossed the clearing. Will had no talent in aircrafting, but even he could feel the evil presence behind it.

“We have to flee! If these are wights-“

The ground transformed and for the first time of his life he saw the ground being entirely covered in ice. Wild furies should have been risen from their slumber by this act but the whole world was silent. The furies were silent and something hollow came from the senses Robin told him.

His horse and the two other mounts whinnied in terror. The animals tried to escape. They did not go far. Before they had come out of the clearing, they were riddled with sword-sized ice fragments. The horses were dead before they had known the enemy had struck them.

Pale shadows came out from the woods. It was getting hellishly cold. Walking was suddenly hard and painful. And his link with Robin was getting more difficult to maintain.

The world was covered in ice and silent. The beings in front of them were figures of silver and blue, shining and emanating a power he’d never seen before. Their armours were so finely crafted the finest works of the Night’s Watch smiths were unsightly by comparison. Their swords were a pale blue and terribly sharp, their eyes were merciless and entirely ice-coloured.

It was so cold. There were so many of them. Will counted eight of the monsters for the three of them.

But at last he understood the oaths he had taken.

“Night gathers, and now my watch begins...”

“It shall not end until my death,” said Waymar in a vulgar New Furian.

“I shall take no wife, hold no lands, father no children.” Gared’s fury Garrick manifested as its preferred form, a big earth hound emerging from the ground and splintering the frost.

The abominations seemed to recognise the oath words after all. Furies of death and malevolence hissed in his ears and though he didn’t know the language he could recognise the hate.

“I shall wear no crowns and win no glory.”

The ice blade struck at an unimaginable speed but Waymar Royce managed to block with a grunt of effort.

“I shall live and die at my post.”

His two arrows flew like the hand of the Warrior was with him but the ice abomination he had shot parried negligently the bows. His third shot was caught in an arrogant manner with an armoured fist before reducing it in paste when it tightened its grip.

“I am the sword in the darkness.”

Gared and his fury attacked with all their might the first monster in front of them but a wall of ice rose to parry his blows.

“I am the watcher on the walls.”

Waymar Royce and the first abomination were locked into a terrible duel. The Knight Ferrous clearly deserved his title after today but his rapidity and his talent with a sword were overmatched against such an opponent.

The blades were so fast he could only see the flashes when metal met ice.

“I am the shield that guards the realms of men.”

Pain. Terrible pain. Will screamed as he saw a blazing blue sword pierce his chest. Will screamed. It hurt too much. It was like something was pouring pain in his body.

Seven have Mercy, he wanted it to stop.

“I pledge my life...and honour to the Night’s Watch...for the...nights...to come...”

There was a bright light and Will held his last breath.