

# The Forest Says Nothing

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His hair, silver-white and so messy it seemed to have decided for itself which way it wanted to go, stuck out on all sides. His long coat smelled of moss, old books, and a little bit of tea. In his breast pocket was a small notebook in which he wrote down everything the forest told him.

Today, the little notebook remained disturbingly empty.

"Not even a complaint?" Floris said softly.

"No tree with back pain? No root that's stuck? That is really... suspicious."

He stood up, leaned heavily on his walking stick (made from a branch that had once volunteered to become a stick), and looked around.

The WHISPERING FOREST looked back.

Silently.

Even the lights, which normally floated like tiny dancing sparks between the leaves, now hung motionless in the air. It seemed as if they had forgotten what they were supposed to do.

"Good," he said. "Then I shall begin."

He brushed off his coat and began to walk. With every step he listened. Not only with his ears, but with everything he had learned in all the years he had listened to trees instead of to people.

And the farther he walked, the clearer it became...

The forest was not calm.

The forest had been... made silent.

At an open clearing Floris stopped. The ground felt different here. Tense. As if the earth had lifted her shoulders.

"Ah," Floris said slowly. "This is going to be one of those days."

He took a deep breath and looked down the path that lay before him – a path that normally curved cheerfully, but now lay straight and stretched out ahead of him.

"Then it is time," he murmured, "that the others begin to notice as well."

And as he took his first step, somewhere far away... beyond the reach of Floris' stick and ears... BEAR, CHARLIE, LENNY and LURO each, in their own way, would begin to feel that something was not right.

But that...

Floris did not yet know.

Not yet.

