

The Bridge of Forgotten Souls

The Call of the Unknown

The wind whispered across the ancient bridge, curling around Callette like invisible fingers, tugging at the edges of her cloak. She tightened her grip on the leather strap of her satchel, her heart drumming a warning.

No one had ever crossed the Bridge of Forgotten Souls. No one had ever returned. She had come to claim the Heart of Courage - a relic said to grant unmatched bravery. Proof that she was strong enough.

Suddenly a flicker of golden light danced beside her. It was Nyn, the lantern Fox, stretched lazily and his fur shimmering with warm candlelight. His sharp amber eyes studied her, amused.

"Nervous?" he asked, his voice light, teasing. Callette squared her shoulders, "No." Nyn smirked, "Liar."

She exhaled sharply, taking her first step forward. The ancient stones trembled beneath her feet, as if the bridge had been waiting.

Then, the whispers began.

The Voices of The Lost

The mist curled and thickened, shaping itself into shadows. Faces emerged - faces she knew.

Her mother appeared first, her voice gentle yet firm, "Come home, Collette. This path isn't meant for you."

Collette hesitated.

Other voices followed. Her friends, teachers and strangers long forgotten; their whispers rose like the tide, relentless and suffocating.

"You will fail."

"You are not strong enough."

"Turn back."

"You will disappear like the rest."

Nyn walked beside her, his glow flickering slightly,

"They can't hurt you," he murmured. "But they know exactly what will."

Callette clenched her jaw and said, "I won't let fear win."

Then, she took another step. The whispers hissed in protest. The fog thickened - then parted. And she saw herself.

The Shadow on the Bridge

Surprisingly a figure stood in the middle of the bridge. It was her or rather, a version of her - but hollow-eyed, shrouded in shifting darkness, her lips curled into a smirk.

"You won't make it," the ~~shadow~~ Callette murmured.

"You're just pretending to be brave."

Callette's pulse pounded.

Nyn growled, his fur bristling. "Keep moving."

The shadow stepped closer. "You'll vanish like the rest, just like another forgotten soul."

Callette clenched her fists, "I am brave."

The shadow laughed, a sound like cracking ice. "Are you?"

The bridge cracked beneath her feet.

She barely had time to gasp before the stone collapsed - and she fell.

The Descent into the Abyss

blind howled past her as she tumbled into the void. She was going to die.

Then — a golden streak cut through the void. Nyn, his small body wrapped around her, his glow flaring. "Hold on!" he growled, straining. The fall slowed. They hovered, suspended in golden light.

Collette's breathe came in sharp, shallow gasps. "Nyn... you saved me."

Nyn exhaled shakily. His glow had dimmed to embers.

The bridge reformed beneath them, but Nyn barely stirred. His fur was cold against her hands.

Collette knelt beside him, heart hammering, "Nyn?"

He chuckled creakily. "Still here, but not for long." She looked up.

The final gate stood ahead, massive and unyielding. Beyond it, the Heart of Courage pulsed like a dying star.

She could take it. Win. Prove she was strong. But at what cost?

she looked at Nyn. His glow—his life—was fading.

A choice settled in her chest.

Collette's hands curled around him.

Then, slowly — she turned away from the gate and walked away.

The Ultimate Choice

The whispers turned to screams.

"Coward?"

"You were so close."

"This is why you will never be great."

Collette didn't stop.

Nyn stirred weakly, "Collette... What are you doing?"

She smiled though her chest felt tight.

"I don't need the Heart of Courage, I don't need some relic to tell me I'm brave."

Nyn blinked at her. His glow flickered.... then brightened..

The whispers faded.

The mist parted.

And then—the bridge shifted.

A new path formed, not towards the Heart of Courage, but home.

Nyx let out a breathless laugh, "Finally, you passed."

Collette step through.

The Return and the Real Truth

Sunlight touched her skin as she emerged from the mist.

She was back.

The bridge had vanished into nothingness, its final secret locked away.

Nyx stirred in her arms, his glow stronger than before. He blinked up at her, then smirked, "You're the first one to leave the bridge with someone else."

Collette let out a soft laugh. "Maybe that was the test all along."

Nyx stretched, his fur now flickering brighter than ever. "You know," he mused, "most people who walk that bridge try to prove something to themselves. They fight, they take and they conquer."

Collette looked at him. "And?"

Nyx met her gaze, "And you were the first one who chose to save something instead."

Collette turned, staring at the empty space where the bridge had once been.

She had come to the bridge of Forgotten Souls to find courage - to prove she was fearless.

But now she understood.

Courage was never about proving anything. It wasn't about winning or taking, or conquering.

It was about choosing what truly mattered - and standing by it, no matter the cost.

Collette exhaled, something lighter settling inside her.

She had chosen.

And this time, the bridge let someone go.

THE END.

Moral: "True courage is not about proving your strength, but about knowing what truly matters and having the heart to choose it."