



## Folklores and family

"Have you lost it? You know I'm from what human world."

He only chuckled, which irritated me further. He continued eating and smiling for himself again as if he knew something he was not letting me in on.

The worst part was that deep down, I hoped it was true. I hoped I had a family that actually loved me and missed me. But his claim had a considerable fault; if I belonged here, why didn't I have a wolf? I'm still only human.

I also remember that black wolf from my dreams, dreams that first started to devolve after I came here. These dreams felt so real, and I caught myself thinking about them as memories—my only memories of a happy childhood. But I also knew that was only wishes and frugal hopes.

"What? Tell me the truth instead. Where are we going? "

"I never lie, well, not that often, at least! We are going to meet what I think is your family. And I really mean this, Eir, I really think these people are your family. I know you have many questions, but I don't have all the answers, and some of them are not mine to tell."

It was stupid, I know, but a flare of hope flared in my chest, and my heart skipped a beat. Hades chuckled again as he could sense the childish sense of joy that erupted inside of me. He huffed and put his fork down, but he had half a smile on his face, so I knew he was not that angry or frustrated.



"I can tell you this: The barbarians think you are their lost girl pup. Their pack was blessed with a girl child about 23 years ago. The human woman was mated to the pack's beta. There were even rumors of her being an Alpha Maiden. A unique creature that only appears in folklores and old tails. But when the little girl was around three years old, she and her mother disappeared. That is also why and how the war between the two packs. The barbarians believed the Vikings helped her back to the human world; the Viking pack thought they made all this up so that they could attack and steal their lands. So, after about ten years, the war faded and died down. They never buried the hatchet; they still hate each other's guts. For some reason, they believe that girl is you, but I don't know why they believe that. That is all I know."

It was an incredible story, but the first thing that caught my mind was that someone escaped this place and managed to return to the earth. Then, the rest of it sank in. It sounded far-fetched, but could it be? My mother's drunken rambling about monsters, my dreams of a black wolf, and myself as a happy child. I wanted to believe it, wanted it to be me, but I also realized that it sounded too much like a fairy tale. Then that word again, what Toke called me the day he attacked me, Alpha Maiden.

"Toke called me that, an alpha maiden. But he also threw in a whore and basically told me I got wet around all alphas and high-rank beasts.. "

I said it out loud, but it was more for myself than anyone. I didn't really understand what it was, but from the sound of it and from how he spat the words out in disgust, I was not sure I wanted to be an

alpha maiden—magical and rare creature or not. I'm fine, just being human. I would squeal if I suddenly got some powers or something, but I'm okay with being me. I can be me, but I want to be me freely. I want to choose to be here if I'm not going back. I want to make decisions for myself, not depend on others to protect me and form my life as they see fit.

I don't think that's too much to ask; it is the only thing I ask and want. To be free and happy. To be me. To have choices and a voice that would be heard. I'm sick of being openly judged and people deciding my future options and opportunities. It is my life; I want to live it for me. Not based on my mom, not based on our economy, but on me. What I can do, what I have done, and who I am and can be.

"It still amazes me how little he knows! Didn't he study his history?"

Hades scoffed before he continued,

"No, Alpha Maiden is far from a whore. She is a shifter female, blessed by the moon goddess herself. The unique thing is that she is destined to have several mates. The moon goddess chose multiple mates for her, the strongest ones, so she would always have extra protection. In the original story, the Alpha Maiden is a werebear. She meets four men, and they are all her mates. She will then be able to choose the one she wants. Her choices were based on love. The second one was a werecat, given three mates; her mate was selected for a duel. She wanted to see who was most potent and fastest and could use their heads in stressful situations.

Then, the last alpha maiden in history was a wolf; she also met four guys who were all destined for her. What makes her story different is

that she was forcefully marked by a male, the highest-ranked alpha male, when he saw she preferred a mere beta. Not willing to accept the fact that he might lose, he forced his mark on her. Bound her to him for the rest of their lives, the bond to the other males broke. But her desire for the beta never died. She was heartbroken and in pain, as she had to watch him find a new mate, watched him have a family. Some say that is why females are no longer born. The goddess punishes us for disrespecting such a special gift, ruining something pure and magical. We waited for the next to rise, and all had hopes for the young girl born in the barbarian pack. Of course, she was way too young back then to know any of this. But the pack Alpha saw an opportunity, and he promised her as a mate to another pack.

If she were an alpha maiden, she would not know; she would only recognize the other alpha son as her mate. If she never knew of her options, there would never be a problem. The idea was for her to move packs when she was 16, about one year before she got her wolf. That way, the first alpha she saw would be the one she was promised, and wolves are firmly attached to their destined mates. Well, at least from what the stories tell us, even chosen mate wolves protect their lives if they are mated. So, for this alpha, it was the perfect deal. But you know, then the girl disappeared with her mother."

He shrugged and got back to his food,

"How stupid could he be?"

I could not hold back; I mean, come on! They ruined it all by forcing a female, tricking and destroying what they believe is faith and a blessing from the gods I don't believe in. They lost so much this way;

living in a world where only boys were born meant they would eventually die out. Their species would be extinct. But then they get a new chance, and they do it all over again?

"This world should never be a male-dominated world, to begin with! Men! All that matters is power and raw muscles! Even your own gods try to tell you that this world needs more love, care, and understanding! "

I roared at him. I was unsure where this anger came from, but my body trembled. I felt harassed, mistreated, misunderstood, and outright disrespected. And that's just me as a female, a woman in this world. I have no problem seeing their gods punishing them for it! Not at all, actually!

"Calm down, Eir; it is just an old folklore, a story told around the fireplace through generations. Nobody knows if there is even a word of truth in it. And even if it were, there is not much to do about it now. Come, it is time to get some sleep. I have made my room for you and will stay there through the night to ensure you are safe. Toke is locked up down below deck, but just to make sure. Tomorrow, you will get to meet them yourself; they can tell you so much more than I can."

I was tired; I'd been sleeping or comatose for three days, but I was still dead tired. I felt my muscles ache and my head throb. So he was right; I needed to sleep. If there really were a chance these people were my family, it would be best I didn't look like a raging sleep zombie.

"Okay, but I'm sleeping alone."

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"Nope, no can do!"

He winked and opened the door for me to follow.



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