

Chapter 9 – The Goddess

“Great mothers are benevolent beings with irreplaceable supreme love.” — Wayne Chirisa

Halima

Silence. The complete absence of sound.

A world full of silence was a world worth living in. There was no pain, no sorrow, and no tears. Just me, alone, in a void of complete darkness. Death had always been something to fear, instilled in the minds of man and beast since the beginning of time. But really, the world of life should be feared. The mortal realm was full of gloom, and if you're lucky enough, you could beat it.

I did.

The world full of misery and corruption

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was behind me, for I no longer existed. I died and was never coming back. It was a joyous occasion, for I broke the shackles that chained me to earth, releasing my soul to where it needed to go. I loved it. It's a feeling I didn't want to escape from.

"Halima..."

What was that? The voice of an angel at the gates of heaven?

"Halima, my sacred child..."

The feminine voice was unfamiliar, yet it gave me a deep sense of comfort. It held no evil, no malice, only love, and care. If all the angels' voices were like this, then I had made the right decision to abandon the mortal realm.

"Halima, my sacred child. Please, open your eyes."

It wasn't an authoritative order, but a

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gentle command. How could I open my eyes if I didn't have a body? The void split open, revealing a land of white light, rivaling the golden light of the sun.

Shining with magnificence, it was unlike any light I'd ever seen. Not long, the void of light bathed me at all sides. My feet, somehow there, wiggled above the airy ground. It was a sign that I had a body. Bending down, I saw my near-tangible body was like the shell I left behind, yet it was more translucent. I could see through my flesh, but I didn't have any bones. I also noticed that I was wearing a knee-high white dress with thickened straps.

"Where am I?" I whispered to the cool air.

"You are in the realm of light, my child. I've come to speak with you. I never expected to see you so soon." Tiny balls of light flew in from every corner of the realm, dancing, and twirling merrily like fireflies. Mesmerized, I watched the little

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lights combine to outline a female figure. I couldn't believe my eyes at who appeared, because I was in awe of her blinding beauty. 

What emerged was an ethereal woman, a beauty incomparable to anything on earth. Her snow-white hair cascaded down to her ankles like expensive silk, the strands dancing in the gentle breeze blowing around us. Her celestial gray eyes stared me down, full of love and adoration. They were like two full moons, reigning beauty, and femininity over Earth. She had to be more than a foot taller than me, as expected from someone of her status. The woman's ivory skin stood out in the silver dress she wore, adorned with clear-cut diamonds and sapphires. Her cupid-bow lips widened to that of a smile as she stepped into my space, placing her hands on my shoulders. The moment her warm hands touched me, it all dawned on me.

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I knew exactly who this woman was.

“Moon Goddess?”

“Please, call me Selene.” She chuckled, moving her hand to cup my cheek. “Oh, my dear. You have suffered greatly. I can see it in your eyes.” ¹

I couldn't hold it together. I couldn't control the tears that fell from my eyes. The combined sensations of her supple hand and her words broke the dam inside me. The comfort and warmth of Selene were what I desperately needed on Earth. I needed someone to look into my eyes to see my pain. To recognize how close I was to crumbling. I needed someone to hold my cheek the way Moon Goddess Selene was holding me right now.

I needed someone to care for me.

“Selene...” I cried out as hiccups violently jerked my body. She drew me into her

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arms, hugging me with the love of a mother. With my head on her stomach, I cried my heart out, each sob echoing the amount of torture I'd been through, and each bruise inflicted on my body. I half expected Selene to push me away, but she didn't. She held me, tightening her hold, allowing me to have my release. Her soft shushes calmed me down as her fingers gingerly ran through my curls. ²

We remained like this for what felt like an eternity. When I was sure I couldn't cry anymore, I pulled away from her arms, looking up at her beautiful face. "Am I in heaven?"

"Yes, and no." Selene chuckled, wiping my tears with her thumb. "You're in my realm, my child. The Realm of the Moon Goddess. My children pass through here before I give them the blessing to enter their final resting place. They meet me, we have a brief chat, and then they are on their way."

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I gasped in shock. This was the space between earth and heaven? It wasn't exactly how I imagine the path to heaven to be, but I wasn't complaining. To see the legendary goddess was rewarding enough. "So, I died?"

"Yes, you did." Her smile turned into a sad frown. "You sank to the bottom of the river, lost in the darkness. Your body suffered damage from the fall, but the water took your life. You've drowned, my dear."

"That's what I was aiming for." I laughed dejectedly. My joke didn't land, telling by the forlorn expression on Selene's face. I coughed once. "I'm...I'm sure you know what happened to me when I was alive."

"Yes. Shame on those wolves." Selene shook her head in contempt. "You didn't hear this enough while you were alive, but you did not deserve their treatment. You

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did not deserve to be branded and cast out. You are innocent, always have been, and always would be. Such a fool that alpha is; rejecting the one I've made for him." ¹

"Well, he's got someone else now. I'm sure they're on their way to making their little pups." I rolled my eyes, pursing my lips in disgust at the thought of Neron. Another thought entered my mind, something I always wanted to ask if I ever got this once-in-a-lifetime chance. "...Why didn't you answer my prayers before? I can't remember the number of times I prayed for an escape...but you never answered me. Why?"

Selene's frown fell to deep sadness once again. Regret swam in her eyes as she soaked in what I had just asked. It looked as if she wanted to cry but was holding herself back. I remained still, bracing myself for the answers I've sought for years.

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“There is only so much a Moon Goddess could interfere with for her wolves.” She whispered. “I may be a god, my dear, but I cannot interfere in everything my wolves do. My job would never end! While it is my duty to watch over my pups, I also must allow you all to make your own decisions. To make mistakes and learn from them. To see the errors in your ways and, with great hope, allow that to push you on the correct path. Unfortunately, not many of my children are lucky enough to have this level of wisdom and continue to do wrong to their communities and for themselves.”

“But you abandoned me.” I accused, feeling my chest tighten. “I needed help, but it never came. Even when that guard did the unspeakable, I prayed for you to save me.”

Selene shut her eyes and mewled in sadness, as if she could feel the very pain I was feeling. “I know, my dear. There were times where I wanted to bring you out of

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that misery. To punish those wolves for harming their own. But if I did, your pack would never learn to regret what they have done.” ¹

I wanted to be mad. I wanted to shout and scream at Selene for deserting and feeding me to the hounds, but I couldn't. The momentary anger I felt faded the instant she opened her mouth. I didn't have it in me to be angry at my Moon Goddess, despite having every right to. Growing up in the werewolf community, it was instilled in young wolves that Selene was this well-known, omnipotent being who could do anything for us. She cured our ills, healed our communities, and protected us. She loved us. But now, seeing this deity in front of me, told me she was not our fairy-godmother. She couldn't grant all our wishes and fix our mistakes for us. We needed to do that ourselves.

Every decision we made had consequences

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and here was mine after killing myself.

“If you do everything for us, we wouldn’t learn anything. We’d be lazy dogs while you wait on us, hand and foot.” I concluded.

“Yes. You all would not learn the value of self-efficacy.” Selene finished with a smile, cradling my cheek once again. “I knew you were smart enough to understand me. It’s a shame that intelligence wasn’t cultivated when it was needed the most. Don’t think I’ve abandoned you, my child. Even I have limitations.”

“I know you didn’t.” I shook my head. “I was just...I was angry. I accepted my fate as a slave. You tend to learn things quickly when you’re in captivity.”

Selene drew me into a hug once again, reminding me I need not worry anymore. I was safe with her.

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“I know. While the circumstances of your death were terrible, I needed you to come to me.” I arched an eyebrow while she spoke. “There is something you have to know about yourself and your purpose. Have you ever wondered why you were blessed with a white wolf?”

Before I could answer, several barks resounded from behind her. I took a glance over Selene’s shoulder to see said white wolf dashing toward us from a distance.

It wasn’t just *any* white wolf.