

Sathrine sat on top of a cave dug into a hill. She stared out far across the land in front of her, hills and plains leading eventually to the lake the sustained the nearby city of Anthos. She lightly sniffed the air, smelling the smoke emanating from the cave telling her the small girl's fire had gone out for the night. Telling her the girl was likely fully asleep, and she would no longer have to worry about being seen. She stared at the moon for a moment, the light reflecting on her piercing green eyes and hopped down to enter the cave.

As she gathered, the young girl was fast asleep, breathing with a rhythmic slowness that Sathrine knew would not last. The girl's nightmares had been growing worse as time passed, and it broke Sathrine's heart. She could do nothing for the girl, if she showed herself it would only make it worse. She leaned her large head down and bit the girl's dirt covered blankets, setting them snugly up to her neck and departed the cave as silently as she appeared.

"She sleeps silently for now, brother," Sathrine whispered to the wolf waiting for her in the treeline behind the cave.

"She ate and everything then?" Anima responded after dropping a rabbit from his massive jaws. "And I went to the trouble of bringing it right to her," He laughed quietly.

"Yes, Anima," Sathrine said, sitting in front of him outside of the trees. "Her night-terror will take her soon though, the moon wanes."

"We cannot show to her, sister."

"I know, brother," Sathrine snarled. "It would break her. Those animals of Afaímaxi use us as their marker, painted on their armor and banners in crimson. Fools!" She barked, walking swiftly into the forest.

"Yes, I know." Anima followed quickly behind, weaving their large bodies through the trees with a graceful ease. "Almost as if they believe we would fight for them!" Anima laughed, a hollow mix of a bark and howl. "Pathetic. We didn't fight for them five-hundred years ago..."

"Correct," Sathrine trotted into the clearing they kept, sitting in the moonlight. She stared hard at her brother's large gray body and white belly, his scarred muzzle and neck.

For hundreds of years they'd fought humans and themselves, only the young girl in the cave showed them a different way to live. A way in which they protected life instead of taking it.

They had stumbled across her by accident a year prior, finding her running screaming and bloodied from her city as it was raided. The girl had no doubt witnessed her family slaughtered, and by the injuries she herself sustained it was clear an attempt on her life was taken as well. How she managed to escape was still a mystery to them, both assumed it had to be a mix of luck and a sacrifice from her family to allow her time to run.

"Have you smelled them?" Sathrine asked, pointing her nose up to the moon to sniff the cool night air. She was bathed in moonlight, making her pristine white fur almost illuminate in the darkness.

"What do you take me for, a human?" Anima bristled, turning his back to his sister. "It's only two women coming from that inn, nothing more. They won't be here for a day or so yet, sleep for now sister. Nothing comes to harm the child tonight."

As Sathrine scented, a single woman approached the girl's cave the next night. She kept low with a hooded cloak covering her head, with the scent of the other woman and a horse clinging to her. The woman kept low and hidden, making her presence known to the girl, letting Sathrine and Anima for the first time hear her voice in the brief exchange before the woman disappeared to retrieve her "companion" as she called her.

It wasn't an hour more that she returned with a snarky looking stallion and what was clearly an elf. "She doesn't know she's an elf, does she?" Anima whispered through the rain, watching the elf's ears pop free of her hood as she greeted the girl they watched, and hid behind her companion.

"It doesn't seem so," Sathrine inched forward, sniffing at the elf and her human partner. "They're both connected by the elf's blood and neither know it." She scoffed, turning away to sleep for the night.

The next morning, Sathrine and Anima were both awakened early, watching the young girl trot away. Anima followed silently, with Sathrine left to watch the two women,

almost scrambling as they woke to search for the girl. She didn't bother to listen in on what they said, she knew already that the younger girl was heading back to her cave with a rabbit she thought she snared on her own, left behind for her by Anima. The girl's snares were solid, and well made, she simply didn't know yet where to place them along game trails. Sathrine watched the girl trot into her cave, sharing the rabbit with the two other women. It was in that simple moment, watching the girl share the little that she had among others, that Sathrine felt perhaps the world wasn't so doomed as she and Anima thought. That perhaps humans truly could learn to live in peace.

The wolves hid as always the entire day, waiting out what the other two women would do. They found themselves almost intrinsically curious of them, primarily wondering why or how an elf could have ended up on this continent. They both knew though that since she herself had no idea of her lineage, that answer would not be easy to come by.

"We should follow them," Anima offered as the sun waned into twilight.

"I agree, brother," Sathrine replied. They both lie in wait, watching the moon rise up over the girl's cave. Their eyes adjusted immediately to the shifting light, able to see the women as they snuck away into the darkness, leaving the girl with their horse.

"Shall we both go then?" Anima said, already making his way through the trees.

Sathrine simply nodded, following her brother into the dark forest, keeping to the shadows and bushes to keep fully out of sight even though they traveled within easy sight of the elf and her partner.

"They've set up battlements, we can't sneak in. We'd have to kill every human in the city..." Sathrine let out a long, slow breath. "We'll just have to liste-" Her head perked up, listening to a shrill scream through the trees.

"Go! I will watch the elf and her human," Anima commanded, slamming his large head into Sathrine's side.

Sathrine sprinted faster than she ever had in her life, traveling in plain sight through the road, uncaring if any late night travelers saw her. The young human was in danger directly, she no longer cared at all if she was seen. She slid to a stop, dirt from the road kicking up and rolling around her paws and body. Her eyes widened in stunned horror, what could only possibly be her worst night-terror unfolding before her piercing green eyes.

The horse the women had with them lie dead, his head removed and blood sprayed across the cave. His body was pressed into the wall with an absolute beast of a man hovering over it, grunting and growling. Sathrine could just barely see the girl's legs under him yet she heard every scream, every ounce of the girl's pain slamming into the wolf's body like a pyroclastic flow the likes of which none had ever seen.

"You..." Sathrine growled, bristling and dropping low. "Get off my child!" She snarled, sprinting forth off her hind legs with her jaws open wide, ripping and tearing at the man's arm.

"Heh?" He growled back, flexing his inhuman muscles to throw the enraged wolf away. He stepped back from the girl and wiped his bloodied arm on his jerkin, cracking his neck as he situated himself to fight the wolf. "Which are you then?"

Sathrine jumped again, her jaws open wide. The man caught her by her lower jaw, slamming his massive fist into her head. She yelped, thrown back out of the cave by the force of the blow. She could barely hear the girl still whimpering in pain, their eyes meeting for only the slightest moment before the man blocked Sathrine's view.

He reached down to pick the wolf up easily in one hand, staring into her eyes. "Sathrine." He says simply, slamming her head into the dirt, stepping on her muzzle. "Anima was the fighter back then, and yet you're the one who shows." He laughed, pressing his heel hard into her muzzle. "Pathetic, even without the elf blood any of my soldiers could end your life. What happened to the wolves? Once so proud and strong... now you simply hide and observe, only killing weaklings when you're seen." He twisted his heel, breaking her nose as he stepped away. The last Sathrine saw was the man grabbing the girl and his foot hitting the side of her head.

“Sister!” Sathrine barely heard, her mind in a haze of pain and her heart full of anger. She shook her head, the world shifting back into focus slowly around her. She could see little more than her brother’s large, gray head over her.

“Brother...” She groaned, lucky they didn’t speak through movement of their mouths. She looked down to her muzzle, only slightly bent but throbbing in pain. “That human-”

“Not human, sister. I scented his blood, he’s orc, half-blood.”

“Of course,” She stood shakily, unable to smell much with her broken muzzle. “And the girl? Is she okay?”

Anima paused, walking a circle around his sister before sitting in front of her. “No. The half-blood killed her in the city. The elf fell, barely survived. And the other human woman, well...” Anima almost smiled were it not for the heaviness of his own heart at the loss of the girl. “...She’s consumed the elf’s blood directly.”

Sathrine sighed, staring at the forest floor, panting. She stood, and silently lead her brother away, planning how to kill the half-blood orc that had killed the child they had come to love.