



THE
WOLF
AND THE
SEA

Ylva
Moor



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For my darkling:

They don't love like we do.

For the reader:

The world of Aurea, Cimmer and Mirror Realms is a world where love is not simple and paths are not straightforward. Here every saint has a past, and every villain has a future.

If you are no stranger to being broken, feeling lost or hitting the rock bottom, you will find your own light and your own darkness staring back at you from these pages – and here, you will find a home.

To depict this story as it happened is to depict mental illness, violence, sex, bondage and domination, physical injuries and recovering from them, hopelessness and despair. Readers sensitive to these themes are advised to take this into consideration.

Now, let us begin...

*In the valley of shadow there lies a dark scar
On the scar is a silver lake, shining like star
On the shore, a pale maiden holding a sword
For only with life you can open death's door*

In the beginning, when the world was created, it was created in the
image of a lake.

On the surface of the lake was the light and life, the trees and animals,
the sun and the crescent silver moon. This became the world as we
know it.

But the lake also had a reflection. This reflection, too, became a place:
a world of shadows, an echo. Everything in there lived without
knowing the warmth of the sun, wandering in darkness and finding
their solace there.

Just like two sides of the moon, these two worlds lived without seeing
each other, eternally tied to each other, their fates intertwined.

The world of light became known among our people as the land of
visible light, the moonlit path, or the realm of light. The reflection
became known as the land of shadows, valley of death, or the final
home.

There were sometimes those who traveled from light to dark, or from
shadows to the moonlight, because they found their home in the
realm they had not been born in.

This story tells you of the one who became the traveller between these
Mirror worlds.

The one who served both the Moon and the Raven.

Chapter 1: Explosion

The spot marked on the map must have been wrong, because there was no assassin hideout.

All Quir could see was a rocky shore, where the wintry forest frowned at the weather calming from the storm. Frustration came out as a raven's call.

Following the shoreline further north revealed a brief metallic glimpse from between the trees, then it disappeared from her sight again. Frustration changed into glee as she adjusted her wings to catch a thermal to approach.

She would check the hideout before Kiril would get here, before they would have another argument. If Kiril did not come here, he would not accidentally get himself killed by being careless.

Of all the hunts she had been on, this was so far proving the most dangerous. She thought about the hideout in Steelkeep; bodies of people who had been loyal to Kiril, Kiril's tight expression. It had taken a good while to find someone who was willing to talk: those who had managed to avoid Haze's ire were afraid. Nobody wanted to be the next on his list.

She did not think Kiril and her had time to spare for arguing. The lack of sleep from the past week made her thoughts slow and sluggish.

But she had to focus. The information they had gotten could still turn out to be a trap.

Upon approach she saw a small stream where the flash had been, just large enough that a small boat could be dragged off the shore and be hidden among the rocks. Not large enough to be a smuggling harbor, not even a remote one.

She circled the area and examined it carefully. No people, but traces of them; a hidden boat, a burrow filled with barrels and boxes, lanterns, rations. As she flew closer, she saw another boat dragged over to the shore. It was covered by a heavy layer of snow.

There was an odd, sharp scent from the barrels. Like sulphur.

Strange.

She landed on top of the barrels to examine them, but also to perch comfortably for a long wait. If she would wait long enough, people would show up. She could see where they went, where they came from. If one of them could be Haze. Kiril would not be here for another day, maybe two. Unlike him, she would do this carefully, and neither of them would get killed.

If only they could stop arguing. If only she was not so tired. If only the voices inside her head-

A faint hiss reached her ear - like a struck match, except the sound did not stop, it grew. Something ruffled her feathers, like there was levin in the air - an approaching thunderstorm.

She only had time to tilt her head in confusion before the barrels burst into fire and splinters of wood.

Explosion.

She remembered another explosion from many years ago. Fire, fire all around her.

Darkness settled in before the fear did.



Chapter 2: Darkness

Darkness and the scent of smoke, fire and burning hair, seared flesh. She would not eat meat cooked over fire for decades afterwards. Nerion screaming and running to her.

The burning sensation turned into a different kind of fire when he helped her into a chilly spring. Whispered apologies drowned under her sobbing.

Their empty home turned into an island for two shipwrecked. Quir rested on her bed and watched the moon in the sky night after night. Other children ran around outside and she wondered if Nerion was with them.

Nerion, who came back early in the morning and would not tell her where he had been, when he came to feed her.

Nerion, who spent more and more time with his journal, eyes burning, gaze closed-off.

Memories shifted and mixed with each other like images layered on top of each other. The explosion of her past was the same as the explosion now, the fire was the same, the pain was the same. The silence of the frost-covered shore was the silence of her home. Nerion's anger was Kiril's anger, both of them left and abandoned her. The blanket of snow was the same as her blanket at home.

She was cold.

When she woke up to high fever, her body burning, she was no longer alone. Orion, her father, had knelt down next to her and rested his cool hand on her forehead.

Is she alive?

Nerion was the one asking, but it did not sound like the brother she knew. Cool snow fell on her face. Orion lifted his hand back, and she was burning again.

Barely.

Her father did not sound like himself either. He pulled her up to sit, and when she tried to tell him it hurt, just a hoarse sound left her lips.

When Orion lifted Quir on his arms, pain made everything go black.

She first thought she was still burning, because her skin felt like it was on fire.

Then her mind noticed the swaying and the rough sheets below her. They chafed like a whetstone.

She made a weak sound out of her throat and turned her head slowly to one side, then to another. A coarse blanket, a coarse pillow. She grimaced, then blinked her eyes open to try to comprehend where she was. Everything was blurry, but somewhere to her right sat a vague figure.

“Dad?” The word was shallow and escaped in her native tongue. She heard a faint sound of rustling clothes, someone breathing. Wood was creaking all around her, and seagulls were screaming somewhere not too far.

Seagulls?

She had first seen seagulls in Aurea. When she had arrived by a ship.

A ship. Was she on a ship?

“Are you awake?” A strange voice with a strange accent. Warm fingers brushed over her burning forehead. “It would be good if you could drink something. Should I help you sit up?”

“Mm,” Quir agreed quietly. She was thirsty. “.. where-?”

The touch was gentle, but when it moved to her arm to help her upright, she flinched from pain. Everything was hurting, just like everything had hurt when Nerion had burned her. The stranger let go of her when she let out a startled, hoarse whimper. Pillows were moved against the headboard, then the stranger helped her up to lean against them.

The pain was constant and paralyzing. It robbed her of her focus.

“You are aboard *The Blue Sage*,” he told her. A water glass was brought to her lips. Finally her vision cleared enough that she could make out the shapes of a small ship cabin. It was bare, just a bed and a cupboard, but from the open doors of the latter she saw a collection of jars and herbs. *The Blue Sage*, she repeated the name in her foggy mind when it threatened to immediately slip away from her.

The figure before her was a forestborn - *woodfolk, goodfolk*, as they said back in her home. Grey skin, ears covered by soft down, warm, green eyes. The water he offered her cleared away the remnants of sleep. It made her more aware of the pain.

“Hurts,” she whispered. Her anxiety grew at the feeling of pain and at how slowly her thoughts were moving.

How much time had passed? Why was she on a ship?

“Yeah, I know.” He patted her head very gently for someone his size. His demeanour was the same way, too; calm and soothing as he took the glass from her. A bitter aftertaste lingered on her tongue. It did not taste like water.

“I said it would be kinder to let you die, but I was told to keep you alive. So I did my best,” he continued and leaned back on the chair beside her bed. “Do you think you could eat? It would help you regain your strength.”

She was still trying to put her thoughts together. She had been far up north, near Steelkeep. There had been snow. Something... she had gone to check something. Her stomach growled.

He had mentioned food. Or eating.

"Yes. Is..." She swallowed. "How long has it been since you found me? Where are we now?"

"On the northern seas." The answer was as vague as her thoughts. The chair creaked as the giant stood up. "It has been three days. You slept naturally most of the time, I drugged you for the rest of it so you would not go into shock and die. I'll be back in a moment."

The door did not seem to be locked, but standing up and trying to walk was the last thing on Quir's mind at that moment. She looked down.

Her own clothes were gone, and there were smears of ash on her skin. She was wearing a simple white gown. Her arms and hands were bandaged, as were her legs. As was her lower body. As was her chest. As was half of her head, she discovered when she brought a hand to touch her cheek.

Normally, long silvery strands of hair cascaded down her chest and shoulders - now there was nothing.

The realization gave her a long pause as her mind refused to comprehend the most likely explanation. She ran her stiff fingers through the remaining, uneven strands of hair, just barely covering her long, pointed ears. The sensation felt a different kind of nauseating.

If she had not been found, she would have died.

Three days. It would have taken Kiril three days to get to the site, to find traces of explosion. Traces of whatever remained of her

belongings, her equipment. Perhaps Fenris, too, had made it to the site. Perhaps he had found Kiril.

The memory of Kiril made her choke up.

My hotblood.

She had plenty of time to wrestle with her thoughts until the giant returned with a cup of soup.

"Lukewarm, so you won't burn yourself further," he told her as he took a seat next to the bed again. "Can you eat, or would you like me to feed you? The first mate wants to see you once you are done."

Such a pampered housecat you are.

"I'll eat myself." She took the bowl with both hands, but was already able to tell it would be hard. Her hands were shaking just with the effort of holding the bowl. Her mind was trying to hold onto the pieces of information he had given her. "... who is the first mate? And - you?"

"I'm Penlador, but everyone calls me Pen. You may just as well do the same," he said and handed her a spoon. "First mate is Halam the Silent. He doesn't speak much - can't since he has no tongue - so unless you sign, I'll stay to translate."

She had already sunk her spoon into the soup, but stopped at the mention of Halam's tongue. There was little doubt in her mind about why Halam was missing his tongue: there was only one reason, one person, in the whole continent, responsible for those stories. Kiril was known for leaving his victims unable to speak ever again.

"I don't sign, sadly," she said and stirred the soup. "... but I have a friend who does, so I'm familiar with the language."

Her fingers trembled from effort as she lifted the spoon again. Kiril had entered her thoughts again, and the thought hurt so much she spilled soup on the blanket. At that point Pen took the spoon from

her. He did not comment on it, nor did he look like he pitied her - if anything, he looked like he had been expecting as much. The look made her hold back tears of frustration.

She was nothing.

She had nothing.

No strength of body, no clarity of mind, no health, no freedom, no possessions.

But that was how all druids began their training, she reminded herself. No skills, no knowledge, nothing. Just their community - and she had made do without even that most of her life. That thought finally helped her draw a deep, shaky breath, and focus on the only task that mattered: eating.

After she had eaten and Pen had taken the bowl away, he returned with an albino elf with a scarred face. His red eyes regarded her curiously - and with recognition.

She recognised him too. Pictures came before names in her worn, slow mind: albino elves were not common anywhere, so even when Aurea had been new and strange to her, this man had stood out to her. She remembered a boat, pirates. People she and her friends had briefly worked with, this man rowing, signing. This elf was called Halam the Silent, just like Pen had said.

Quir stared at him and finally managed a slow nod to greet him with. To signal she, too, remembered him. Halam nodded back and came to stand beside her bed. His eyes took in her state, the numerous bandages Quir was trying not to think about, the burns peeking from under.

She wondered what he saw and thought. Halam had every reason to hate Kiril.



She was a hero. But heroics come with a cost.

For her, that cost was a broken mind. When that
broken mind gets her caught in an explosion,
she can no longer afford to ignore it.

The only place left for her to recover belongs
to a man she has been taught to fear.

As she learns to walk again and searches for the
assassin responsible for the trap, the line between
reality and hallucinations begins to blur.

And as the wheels of fate begin to turn,
an arrangement built on ropes and
desire starts to become something more.

Wolf and the Sea is the first book of
a fantasy romance series.



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