

# Holy Mother-Prologue

What follows is an account of the most fantastical of tales. So much so it would not surprise me should it's veracity be doubted. Sometimes, even I myself doubt it. A part of me suspects that I am lying in a ditch somewhere, blood seeping from my broken body and all that has followed was merely a hallucinated crafted by a dying mind.

Said events though have been such a panoply of sights, sounds, and sensations that have challenged my own notions of fantasy that should they not prove to be real, then the afterlife has been more generous than the dreams of the most devout divine believer.

It all began...a lifetime ago. In many ways it was. At the end of my old life in every way.

My name is Saria Wilhelm and this is how I began my journey.

I was born in a typical suburban life the midwestern region of the United States of America, one of Earth's many nations. In spite of what people who know me today claim: I was a normal girl. The only difference was my mixed heritage gave me what many said was an exotic allure.

For the first two decades of my life everything was as normal as it could be for someone like me. School, vacations, homework, proms, and plans for higher education. A few relationships here and there but nothing worthy of the epics. All in all, a good life.

But life is the biggest obstacle to one's plans. Often in the cruelest of ways. Before the accident, my family consisted of my mother, my father, older sister, and a younger brother. We had our share of arguments and disagreements but we loved each other regardless and deeply.

I see them all to this day...In the faces of the children I have borne.

We were driving home from a family dinner one night when our vehicle was struck dead on by a larger Earth vehicle known as an 18-Wheeler. Its driver had been overworked and had fallen asleep at the wheel which led to them colliding with my family's car. My mother and sister were killed instantly. My father, younger brother and myself were severely injured. The recovery was long and painful. Adding to our agony: my brother's body was too broken and he succumbed to his injuries. My father and myself were all that was left. It took us months for our bodies to heal. The injuries to our souls were just as deep. The pain of losing our family was a constant source of agony for both of us.

My father had never been a cruel man but my mother was very much the heart of our family. When she was so suddenly and so cruelly taken from us, my father's heart shattered alongside his bones.

It does not do to dwell on details but the pain, both mental and physical took a heavy toll on the two of us. Eventually the weight became too much to bear for my father. You could say that he had succumbed to his wounds as much as my brother. He turned to drink to numb the pain but it could not soothe his anger.

One morning, I woke up and my father was gone.

I never saw him again.

I do not wish provoke anger though many of my friends have wished to avenge me.

It is true that my abandonment wounded me greatly but enough time has passed where I comfortably say that I was as much relieved as grieved when he departed. The man I so adored growing up had disappeared and had been replaced by an angry, hurtful stranger. I no longer hold any hatred or resentment towards him.

I genuinely hope my father has found a measure of the peace that I have found.

Such sentiment didn't change the fact that when my father left, he did not take family's tremendous amount of medical debt with

him. Being a legal adult, I was responsible for paying them off. Having no paying job and still too burdened by aches and pains to get one, I was forced to sell all of my family's worldly possessions. As painful as that task was, hindsight has shown taking such actions would aid me in the events that were to follow.

When the whole matter was settled, I had just a little money left along with my family's car. Try to understand reader, I was younger then and still largely untempered to the harshness of life. My happy life had been destroyed. I had no desire to keep up with the one I had left.

I do not share this account in order to bring pity upon myself, I only tell it to establish context. In all honesty, it makes my eventual triumph all the sweeter.

There was nothing left for me. My family home belonged to someone else and I little more than the clothes on my back. I got in my car and drove off in a random direction. I wasn't really sure where I was going. I had no other family and I just wanted to get away. From people, from my pain, from...everything

My body might have healed but my mind and spirit remained broken. The random direction I chose turned out to be north, to the great forests and mountains.

During my travels, I spent my leftover money on food and fuel. Eventually, those funds ran out. I was so depressed that I didn't really care. I made the decision and used my last fuel to take my vehicle as far as it would go. To the end of the line.

I drove further and further north. The slate grey highways soon gave way to brown dirt. When my car could finally go no further, I found myself on a lonely outlook quite far away from civilization. With no desire to stop, I abandoned my vehicle and departed for a little used trail leading from the outlook. I was like an automaton that some had forgotten to shut off. Destined to keep going until I could go no further.

In spite of conclusions drawn by well-meaning counselors, I was not seeking death. Truthfully I am still not really sure what I was looking for. I know this because...as I tread among the ancient rocks and trees and listened to the birds, I felt a serenity I had not felt in quite some time. Life filled me.

It was nearing nightfall, when I reached the end of the trail. I had arrived at the face of the mountain. My long dormant curiosity was piqued by the sight before me. The ground was covered by boulders of various sizes and the jaggedness of their edges meant they had been broken recently. Perhaps the results of a recent rock slide. Even more intriguing was the crevice that was open in the rock. It seemed to lead deep into the mountain.

It occurred to me that it would make a good shelter until morning. I don't know why, considering my ennui. It was unlikely that anything had made shelter there, considering it's recent formation.

As I crept a few feet into the cave, I realized something unusual. At first I attributed it to the light of the moon rising outside. But it was not the moon. The cave was illuminated from within.

At first, I assumed that hikers or campers had the same idea I had to use the cave for shelter. Soon after...I determined that the illumination was not of natural means.

As I recount these events...it now occurs to me that it felt like something was calling to me. At the time, I did not recognize it.

As I journey further into the cave, it became apparent that this was not a recently created geological phenomenon. The jagged walls soon gave way to stalactites and stalagmites. Curiously, the path before me remained strangely clear and even. The natural cave gave way to smoother walls that were clearly constructed by artificial means. The stalagmites and stalactites were replaced by columns and pillars. Etched upon them were strange runes and symbols that I did not recognize.

I was driven by more than just a desire for shelter. The light was drawing me in like a hoverbug. The deeper I went, the construction became more elaborate.

This was no mere cave, it was an entire temple buried inside the mountain, long forgotten by the rest of the world.

It is obvious now but even then, it was clear that this place was not the result of Earthly hands. The creatures and figures depicted on the walls did not depict any culture or history of my birth world.

Finally, I entered what could only be the main chamber. A domed cathedral of stone that glimmered with fixtures of crystals and

metal. The icons and statuary remained magnificent in spite of their partially ruined state.

I barely noticed them. For I had finally discovered the source of the light.

To this day I remain ignorant of the exact nature of what would become the start of my new life. Theories abound and even the finest scholars I have consulted with have only scant knowledge.

But that is a story for another time.

I took a field trip with my classmates to a recycling plant when I was child. I remember watching in fascination as cans of aluminum were melted down and the silvery liquid was poured into ingot molds. The object floating before me at about eye level looked very similar to that molten metal. It was shaped into a sphere and crystal clear water blended with the liquid silver. The interior of the sphere ebbed and flowed like an ocean contained, but never mixing. A form of energy was definitely emitting from it. Stranger still, it was not heat I felt. The orb was the source of what had called me but I had no idea as to its purpose.

Thoughts of this did not occur to me at that time. I was only concerned with getting closer to the sphere. It called to me.

I have yet to identify the exact mechanisms. I didn't hear any beckoning voices or a mysterious song. I just felt a...pull.

A pull deep in my soul.

It grew brighter as I approached but my eyes did not feel any pain.

A hand reached out toward the shimmering sphere. I belatedly realized that it was my own. It felt like it belonged to someone else.

I couldn't stop myself...even if I wanted to.

Just when my hand made contact...I had the briefest impressions of the sphere suddenly freezing into the image of a globe.

I struggle to describe what happened next...

There was a brief moment where it seemed time itself froze. My heart stopped beating, my lungs ceased expanding and the electricity between my neurons failed to spark.

I did not have time to panic. The pull had transformed from a gentle tug to what I imagine a cannonball feels like.

The sensations were not entirely physical either. It was as if my very soul was filled with energy.

Then...I was gone.

The buried temple, the sphere, the mountains, my whole world fell away like a rock into the sea. Up into the heavens I rose. I was completely enraptured by the view ahead of me. An aurora of colors flowed between the stars and galaxies and quasars that passed before my eyes.

It lasted for both a blink and an eternity. One heartbeat and a hundred lifetimes.

But it was not the end.

It was a new beginning.

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