

I remember as a small child, my sister and I would steal our brother's wooden swords and sneak into our parents' room. We would wrap ourselves in our mother's finest scarves and silks. I would put on her jewelry while my sister, Xanth, pulled on our father's oversized boots and we would laugh and pretend to fight great warriors and dragons and even each other. Our father would catch us and smile before pulling us into his pale arms and tell us we were princesses, not fighters and we would never have to worry about the monsters we battled in our imaginations.

Years would pass and instead of sneaking into our mother's room, we'd sneak out of our beds and out into the moonlit world. I would dance barefoot in the rain and hug the trees and tell my secrets to the animals. My sister would rub mud on her face like war paint and howl like a wolf into the night, swearing she could feel the pain of the forest. We were always different. I was like the light and she was like the dark, but somehow we always knew one could not be without the other. We would make pacts to stay together forever with our blood and dreamed of adventure.

News of our persecution began to spread, and it wasn't long before it reached our lands. Elves were being tortured and sold into slavery. Elven royals were being slaughtered in fear they could inspire their people into an uprising. The night the violence reached our home is still a blur... Waking to the screams of my mother. The sounds of our father and brother's swords in a furious battle. A man appeared in our doorway- He was a guard or a cook, I couldn't place his face. He told us to be quiet as he led us out of our beds and through the halls. The sounds of fighting stopped. Our family had lost. We could hear the voices of strange men ravaging our fine things and our servants. We stepped over the body of our mother before fleeing deep into the woods around us.

We didn't know where we were going. We never stayed in one place for long out of fear. We came to know our companion, the one who saved us, as Eden. He taught us the way the world worked and how to survive in nature. In our travels we met another like us in a tavern, and I met a kind and handsome human who empathized with our people. Through them, we met the Berserkers of Jomsburg who welcomed us into their group.

With them we could be queens and fighters, we could dance barefoot and howl at the moon, and there was never a day without adventure. The monsters in our lives weren't imaginary anymore, but we really didn't have to worry now with a family of Vikings at our side.