

Beautiful

The night sky appeared as velvet nicked by the tridents of the Legions so the sun, in all her glory, could shine through; glittering and beguiling. He sat beneath it on the ground, marveling at the vast, mysterious world above him.

"Beautiful," he whispered.

His words, although spoken in privacy, fell upon the ears of two sisters: not of this world, not of any world he had ever known.

Melantha's eyes widened as she heard the word "beautiful" come from the handsome, young man gazing up at the heavens. Her cold, dark heart opened just enough to let in the praise she knew was directed at her. Licking her bottom lip slowly, she looked down upon him with lust in her eyes. It had been long since she had taken a human, as they were usually not worthy of her attention, but this man struck something deep within her. She was intrigued by the look of him and the instantaneous desire to bed him.

Hardly ever able to tear herself away from her own reflection, the youthful Callista had to admit that the human was quite possibly the most intoxicating creature she had ever seen. The word that graced his full mouth fell upon her delicate ears, and she was vexed. Needing to be near him, to touch him, feel his body close to hers...taste him...she made

her way across the sky to the forest aside where he sat. Bravely setting foot outside the safety of the giant spruce, she sees someone all too familiar not far from her.

"What are *you* doing here, Melantha? Go home. It's not safe here for one as *old* as you."

"Callista, dear sister, take heed and listen closely." Melantha was not in the mood to deal with her sister's insults this day, she wanted, no, she needed to make the human hers. "As your older and much more desirable sister I lay claim to this human, now go home to your hall of mirrors where you are most happiest and do not attempt to interfere again." If the words did not make her point her tone should have. Melantha was not one to be taken lightly.

"Ah, yes...my hall of mirrors. Did I forget to thank you for that, my darling? Really, you were too kind, especially the time it took to include the amusing one that makes me look like a bridge troll. Nice touch. So...*you!*" Callista replied, watching intently as her sister marveled at the handsome rogue still entranced by the stars above. "You're not serious, are you, Melantha? I was only planning on having some fun. Maybe flirt with the human...or..." Callista sees something different in her sister's eyes. Something she had only seen once before, and with it, a chance to play upon the *true nature* of her older sister and one true rival. Something she dearly loved to do, and never shied away from. "You know it is forbidden! Father will be furious...remember what happened the last time you...?"

Melantha's glare stopped Callista mid-sentence and the icy cold tone chilled her to the bone.

"We...will...not...talk...about...that...again, do I make myself clear *sister*? That outcome rests solely on your shoulders, had you not interfered..."

Melantha shook her head to clear away those memories, *his soft blue eyes, his strong hands*; she shakes her head harder and turns her menacing glare back to Callista. Slowly Melantha's lips form into a smirk, little sister wants to play games *again*.

“Callista, *my darling*, I have made my intentions clear, this human is mine, run along and find another...*now*.”

Turning her back, Melantha slowly begins walking towards the enticing human, who was now lying back in the grass still blissfully unaware of the sister's presence or his impending inevitable misadventure.

“Run along, *you say*? *Run*, along? Yes, my dear, sweet sister. I'll *run*,” Callista said as she removed her cloak and gown, “And so will you.”

Going deep into the primeval Glenn, Callista called up the elements, and asked the earth to allow her to become the one thing her sister feared the most. The earth allowed it, but warned her of the consequences of the debt owed in return. Callista accepted, and then ran to follow Melantha; waiting for her moment to make her presence known.

Melantha approached the human quietly, she did not wish to frighten him. As he lifted his head and beheld her she could see the appreciation for her in his eyes.

His audible intake of breath told her that he found her as tempting as she found him, with her emerald green eyes, dark auburn hair that hung past her waistline, soft rounded breasts that accented an hour glass figure that beguiled even the purist of men.

“Hello,” Melantha whispered.

“Hello” he replied looking awestruck and disbelieving.

“You have lured me down from the heavens; I believe you called to me when you spoke the word ‘beautiful’. Am I right in thinking you willed me to come to you?” Melantha spoke with a soothing voice as she slowly reached out a hand to touch the lovely man still sitting on the ground.

The man reached out, accepted her hand, and stood to face her. “I never believed anything could be more beautiful than that sky above...but here you are. Perhaps I did call to you. Perhaps, I...”

Melantha gently touched his face with her hand; felt its warmth. The man reached around her waist and pulled her to him; the longing in his eyes was more than either could stand. Fully ready to give herself to him, she leaned in to kiss him, but suddenly felt something in her hair. Thinking it was just his curious fingers, she continued on her journey to his lips. Locked in a passionate embrace, Melantha continued to feel something in her hair; twisting and playfully pulling. She laughed.

The man smiled, “What’s funny?”

“You’re playing with my hair...it’s so innocent, and yet...”

“My hands are about your waist, I’m not...”

Melantha, puzzled and slightly alarmed, touched her auburn waves and felt a spindly leg that immediately scurried away at her touch.

Melantha looked down. On the ground surrounding them both were thousands of spiders. She felt her would be lover stiffen in her arms with panic.

She pulled him close to her and whispered in his ear, “Trust me, I will allow no harm to come of you this day”.

With that assurance she catapulted him into the nearby river to save him from the deadly spiders she knew her sister had summoned.

“Callista!” shaking with rage, Melantha turned to look for her sister and exact revenge.

Giggling with glee, Callista returned to her former being, and made her way to the river side, where the young man sat, stunned and shaken. She rubbed wet earth on her cheek and naked body, forced tears from her eyes as she had learned to do as a young child and then stumbled to the shore towards the man.

“Please? Help me! My sister, *she’s gone mad!* Please, sir? I don’t know what to do? I heard you from the heavens above, as did my sister. I came to save you from her wicked ways, but she attacked me. Tried to...to...Oh! Sir, it’s horrible. You are not safe here. I must try to get you to safety.”

The good-hearted man removed his jacket and cloaked the lithe body of Callista. She looked deep into his eyes; saw his radiant soul and a fire quickly burning there for her. She reached up, and pulled his lips to hers.

Melantha watched her sister’s little act from a distance, she was well aware of her dramatics; she had been privy to them since they were both little girls. As she saw Callista draw the human closer and place her lips on his, Melantha felt the powers within her boil over. Little sister would not ruin her fun, this time. Calling upon the dark evils, Melantha willed the earth to begin shaking, mirroring her rage.

The tremors broke the couple apart, throwing them both to the ground. As the earth began to split open and lift, the young man began to tumble down the incline towards

Melantha's outstretched arms, while Callista was sent plummeting into the river. Melantha summoned forth the mighty Aboleth that lived in the river and beseeched it to take Callista into the depths and allow Melantha time to abscond with the human, now tightly encased in her arms.

"Let go of me!" the man cried. "We need to save your sister!" he yelled, as he started to trudge the now rocky terrain back to the river. But the river bed was dry. Arid as if a thousand suns had burned it clean. The man, angry and scared, turned to Melantha, "I don't understand? What happened? Where did she go? Where is the river? What have you done?"

"What have I done?" Melantha was outraged.

Callista should be at the depths of the river, yet she had managed to disappear along with the river. Was there someone helping her again, why is it that no one wanted Melantha to be contented? All she ever desired was to find a little happiness, an escape from the heavens and the endless games played there.

Melantha wasn't always evil, but having every pleasure taken from her had turned her cold, darkened her heart and left her with only feelings of lust and desire. She would never allow herself to love; loving someone distorted everything, took your energies and made you weak. Melantha would never be weak again.

In the distance her name was being called.

"Melantha?"

The voice was familiar, but she couldn't see where it came from. She felt a hand on her arm, but the man was standing too far away from her for it to be him.

"Melantha?"

“Do you hear that?” she said to the man, “where is that coming from?”

“Melantha?”

“Father?”

“Mel, honey, wake up...it’s almost time.”

“Oh, Mel! You mussed your hair and makeup! Come on, sit up...let me fix it!” Callista said, taking her hand and standing her up to walk her to the mirror.

Startled, Melantha saw her reflection. She was in a wedding dress.

“No, no, no, this is not happening, Callista stop this now!” Melantha shouted as she ripped the wedding dress from her body.

Melantha was well aware of the mind tricks her sister could play; she needed to focus on the river, needed to return to the river. It was the river that was her last real memory; it was her pull back into reality.

Melantha could feel the charade falling away; she could feel her sister still tightly in the clutches of the Aboleth at the bottom of the river. Coming to her senses she casts her glance at the terrified, yet still hauntingly beautiful man at the center of this competition.

Reaching out a hand in a show of empathy Melantha spoke the words in a mere whisper, “please, come with me, you will be safe as long as we are together, my sister only wishes to keep us apart....don’t you see it is only a game to her....you and I belong together....trust me....I came to earth for you.”

Melantha held back her smirk as the human stumbled forward and grasped her hand tightly.

“Why?” the man asked, “Why does she want us apart? Why should I believe you? I believed her when she said you had gone mad. Give me a reason to believe what you say is true.”

“My darling, do you not believe you wished me down from the heavens?” Melantha kept her voice to the low enticing whisper she could see had an effect on the handsome man.

“Tell me your name, I am Melantha, but please call me Mellie.” Melantha continued to distract him using a bright smile and looking deep into his eyes.

“I, um, Mellie, that’s nice, I am Sebastian” he said as he was pulled into her arms willingly.

“Sebastian, let us away from here.” Melantha said just before crushing her lips to his.

“Mmmellie...um...where is ‘here’?” the man asked earnestly. “Where am I exactly? How did I get here? One minute I am at work, and the next I am here looking up at this beautiful night sky. And now you’re here...and then your sister...I...what the hell is going on? And if I come away with you, where will we go?”

Melantha had seen this look of fear before. Humans were so predictable; anything they couldn’t fathom or wrap their minds around instantly caused them to become afraid. She was tired now, this was supposed to just be a little game, Callista had taken all the fun out of this conquest.

“Sebastian, you must trust me, if you want to be with me you will need to come with me.” Melantha looked at the delectable human with wide eyes and waited for his reply.

The man laughed wickedly, “Your father said you were persistent. I don’t think he knew just how competitive you are... either of you. Isn’t that right , Callista?” The man

glanced over the shoulder of Melantha to see a soaking wet, and shivering Callista stumbling from the dry river bed. “I’ll have to note this in my report to him.” The man snatched a notebook from the air, and scribbled something down, “So, which one of you will it be? As promised by your father, in payment for this test, one of you will come to the Underworld to be the bride of my Lord; the other will return and continue with their Goddess duties, plus the duties of the other.” The man laughed, “I don’t know what you two did to piss off your father so terribly that he felt a need to present so grand a test...but from what I’ve seen this evening...I’m not surprised. Now, *choose!*”

Melantha started to retreat, taking small steps backwards. “Callista?” she managed to choke the word from her shocked lips, blindly reaching behind her in hopes of catching her sister’s hand in hers. As soon as she felt her sister’s wet hand safely encased in hers Melantha pulled Callista to her side and then down with her to their knee’s.

Melantha looked up at the heavens and pleaded, “Father, please, we have learned our lesson, please don’t tear us apart. Callista and I promise we will behave, any other punishment, Father, please. Just don’t make us marry, don’t banish us to the Underworld, Father, please, I beseech you, Father, I will do anything, anything else, Father.....?”

Melantha shuddered as the heavens began to rumble, the skies turned pitch black and the earth shook from the impact of Thanatos, their Father, as his voice boomed down from above.

“Enough Melantha, you have failed this test. Your begging now will not save you, this was my last effort to see if you two could change, as you had promised, I am disappointed, however not surprised that you disregarded my command. Now, as Sebastian said, one of you will be

married, I am not so cruel as to choose which of my wicked daughters that will be. You two can decide that amongst yourselves, but one of you will go with Sebastian, now decide quickly!"

"This cannot be. Cannot be..." Callista mumbled. "Father has been angry before, but never with such...I, I was only playing. I-I-I only wanted your attention. I..."

Callista's mind was reeling, and her face flushed with anger. She looked at Melantha, touched the side of her face, smiled and then stood proudly and spoke to the heavens.

"Father, I volunteer and take your punishment...but I would like a proper goodbye. Please? Present yourself. I wish to embrace my father before leaving his side forever."

"Calli, what are you doing?" Melantha asked, but Callista quieted her with a warm embrace.

"We have had our differences over time, Mellie, I know...but I have never stopped loving you. You are my sister. *My own*. And no man is going to take you from me. No man will decide your fate, just as no man will ever tell me what to do. Please? Trust me?"

The ground quaked, uprooting the trees of the forest, the wind whipped and cried, lifting leaves and branches into a pillar of earthly richness. The greenery became engulfed in flame and burned to ash, falling away to reveal their father's tremendous form. He started to speak, but the forest and earth had taken his chance from him, entangling him in roots and branches until he became one with them...a giant redwood: sturdy, strong and formidable. The earth was silent once again.

Sebastian was anxious, "What have you done? I cannot return without a bride for my Lord...but without your

father, this contract is void. You have left me a prisoner here!"

Callista walked to the giant Redwood and embraced it, "Goodbye, Father. I owed the elements a favor...a sacrifice. In all your fury and flamboyant machinations, you have saved me. *Saved us*. You will not take my sister from me. You will not take me from myself."

Callista walked back to her sister's side, "Dear sister, what shall you do with your *prisoner*?"

Melantha quickly recovered her composure, her sister was far more clever and cunning than she had ever given her credit for. She understood that victory lay in Callista's hands and therefore the rivalry was finished. She would bow to her sister's quick wit and accept that they were now equals.

"Callista, I must admit you have not only bested me this day but certainly saved me from a life in the Underworld. In doing so I let go of the past and from now on nothing will ever come between us. We will be the kind of sisters that Father would be proud of." Melantha bowed low, showing her sister the respect she rightly deserved.

Looking over her shoulder, Melantha said "I think Sebastian is your prize in this game dear sister, however, if you are willing to share...?"

Both sisters began to laugh in glee as Sebastian's eye grew wide with the implications.

"Thank you, Mellie. You honor me...but one of us needs to go home, tell our woeful story to Council and make sure that you and *your human* are...not disturbed," Callista says, embracing her sister. She kisses Melantha on the cheek and whispers in her ear, "Bed him well, Mellie. No eyes will watch you. I'll make sure of it."

Callista took one last look at her sister, breathed deeply, and was gone in a sigh.

Melantha looked at Sebastian with new eyes, this beautiful man had attempted to trick her and she should be very angry. But he was so enticing, so wonderfully perfect.

“Sebastian” Melantha taunted him, “you have a choice here, you can come with me or not.”

Sebastian knew the implications of Melantha’s offer, he might have been a part of the plan to lure one of the sisters to the Underworld but he was really just the messenger and a man.

Sebastian strode purposefully towards Melantha and took her in his arms. “Melantha, I choose you.” he said before crashing his lips to hers.

Melantha let herself get lost in his kisses, she needed to be desired, cherished and loved. She was so lonely, always trying to prove herself among the other goddesses, to her parents, to Callista.

Freeing her mind she put all those thoughts aside and concentrated on Sebastian. It didn’t matter if he was just using her, she needed a release and whom better than this perfect male specimen to give that to her.

Sebastian’s hands tightened around Melantha pulling her close to him, all the while still kissing her passionately. Melantha worked her hands into his hair and pulled him even closer to deepen the kisses. She moaned as his tongue worked its magic in her mouth. Stroking her tongue with his and swirling them together. Sebastian caressed his way up her torso until his hands were on her shoulders; he pushed his hands under the straps of her sleeveless gown. As he slowly began to tug the fabric off her shoulders he pulled his mouth from hers and looked her deep in the eyes.

“Melantha?” he asked her with a deep rumble in his voice.

Melantha simply said yes with a nod of her head.

In one swift movement her gown was on the ground and she stood before him in all her naked glory. Sebastian beheld the goddess in front of him with awe. All previous thoughts escaped him as he could not believe his good fortune. This flawless creature was offering herself to him and he was going to enjoy every minute with her. He resumed kissing her, sucking and licking at her soft skin as he pulled her perfect body down to the ground and began to show her how grateful he was to be with her.

Far beyond, in the heavens above, Callista presented her story to Council.

“It is *done* then?”

“Yes,” she replied to the booming voice.

“Will Melantha agree?”

“Yes,” Callista answered, “I have no doubt in my mind.”

“How can you be so certain?”

“Because she trusts me now, and she knows I am on her side.”

“But you two have been known for your tirades and games...what if she...?”

“My sister and I have grown. We know each other well. Melantha will make a grand Queen. One you can be proud of, and fear. She is smarter than the likes of you, which is without doubt. And with me at her side, she will be a force to reckon with. Do not doubt my sister. She will be demanding, yet fair; stern, yet kind. And above all else...Beautiful.