

Migratory Birds  
Chapter 7

# WATERLILIES



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**I**t was early in the morning when she woke up for a short moment because the sun was shining directly on her face. It smelled like thunder and the air seemed to drone as if it was electrified by the anticipated lightning. But the sun shone brightly and up to that moment there was no cloud to be seen in the sky. Maybe last night's rain had taken away a little bit of the tension but it was obvious that thunder would be coming along, although maybe not that soon.

Thus she wanted to turn away but when she tried to do so, she noticed the girl which leaned against her chest and whose slow breath brushed over her chest's fluffy fur. A smile flitted over her face and she drew the cloth of the sleeping bag closer so that they both were covered nicely and then she closed her eyes and tried to sleep a little longer, a strange expression of peace on her face as she was sure that the other one was with her, willingly resting in her arms that she wrapped around her.

They both woke up when some especially noisy bird started to chirp close by so annoyingly that their sensitive feline eardrums were almost shattered by the penetrating sound. Sheela had to laugh when Jiddy angrily threw a stone into the bushes where the bird was obviously hiding.

But once they were awake, they were no longer able to go back to sleep and so they stood up and started to get ready for the day and Sheela could not help herself but to feel a little bit uneasy because she had slept with the lynx girl once more.

But Jiddy did not seem to notice that, nor did she seem to care about that. She even did not seem to mind her own nudity as she was walking around butt naked for a while, stretching herself in a pretty feline way and Sheela who was busy getting dressed and who saw Jiddy that way for the very first time (during daytime) was amazed by the muscles the lynx displayed without any shyness or boasting: The firm curves and lines of her muscles which stretched over the slender (almost scrawny) body were so tight and strong that there was hardly any trace of femininity left on her. Jiddy really seemed to be nothing but furry muscles which were so well defined that every single one seemed to poke out of the surrounding fur and when she stretched they way she actually did (her limbs had gotten a little bit stiff during the night) the feline grace she displayed was really only comparable with a feral animal which did not know about its own strength that showed up whenever it moved a little bit.

When Jiddy turned around Sheela instantly turned her face away, blushing lightly because she had stared at the other girl so openly.

Afterwards Jiddy prepared a small breakfast with some supplies of hers. They were both rather hungry because they had hardly eaten anything the last day. So Jiddy prepared some strange soup she had found in one of the cans she carried along and they devoured it entirely without much hassle.

Finally they walked off and Jiddy was already pressing a little bit because she was certain that a thunderstorm was coming along and she wanted to reach one

of the Tide Cruise Ferries' moorings before they had to endure yet another one of the infamous storms of Lake Moonfire. (She was certain that she would be able to get over that without any problem but she was not that certain about Sheela. But she did not mention that.)

So they walked over the island, most of the time, in the woods which became more and more like some kind of an old abandoned park because the trees were all at a perfect distance from one another, the ground was plain and when a rock was visible in between the grass it looked like it had been intentionally placed there. There was not much undergrowth either and the trees had no lower branches so that walking was really very easy for them and they covered much more distance than Jiddy would have expected.

During their trip Sheela started to talk about herself, she told Jiddy about her family and the life she had left behind in Zirkel, her hometown: She had been the oldest child of her family and thus she always had to taken care of her three younger brothers and her three younger sisters. Although her mother had been a rather experienced hunter and her father had an income as a carver they had been rather poor because of the many children. They had always been forced to worry about money and thus their life had been anything but easy (a younger brother of hers died because they had not been able to pay for his medicine). She had rarely been able to leave her hometown until she met Rustlan and instead she had helped her parents whenever necessary. Shortly after her ascension to adulthood they had found out that she was magically talented and she had started an apprenticeship with the local shamaness. But then Rustlan and his friend had showed up. They had worked in some local joint for a short while (because they had run out of money) and that was where she met him first. She had been intrigued by him and when he had proposed to her to take her with him she had agreed almost enthusiastically because her parents had already mentioned to her that they were no longer able to watch out for her any longer. That was why she sent her apprenticeship packing and started to roam with Rustlan. They had been on the road for half a year by now and Rustlan had already proven many times that he was anything but a reliable mate. "He's just a boaster," she said. "One should never believe what he says because you can be sure that half of it is a lie." But she had not dared to leave him because she had not been sure what to do without him and thus she had travelled on. Her hope was getting to Fereau where some aunt of hers was supposed to live. Maybe there she would be able to get her teeth into something serious.

Jiddy listened to her without saying much herself. Occasionally she asked something but mostly she kept silent and listened to these tales from this distant, unknown world the puma girl was coming from.

"What about you?"

Jiddy turned her head in surprise as her mind had been wandering elsewhere. "Uh...?"

"Where do you want to go?"

Jiddy shrugged her shoulders. "I dunno..."

“Come on! You can’t be serious about that?” Sheela smiled. “What’s your next goal?”

“I was thinkin’ ’bout visitin’ Mica Peninsula.”

“And thereafter?”

Once again the lynx shrugged her shoulders.

“And what if you came to Fereau with me?” Sheela asked with a lightly mischievous smile.

Jiddy blinked inquiringly.

“Look, I... I was thinking... Aren’t we...? I mean: You and me, together... could we not, eeehm... I... I don’t know! There are so many possibilities. Look, you know all this stuff and you are...? Your experience, your strength, your skills!” She looked at the feline girl with a smile and when Jiddy looked at her in surprise, Sheela realized that she had been smiling. She looked away. But an instant later she looked at the lynx from the corner of her eyes and noticed that Jiddy was now smiling too. “Maybe I could start my apprenticeship again or do something different. My father has taught me a lot about carving... Together we could get us..., I mean, it would be a lot easier if we were together, for the two of us, you know...” Once again she spied at the lynx.

First Jiddy did not react at all, but her ear flicked. Then her hand stroke her muzzle and then she turned around, looked at Sheela and for an instant a broad smile showed on her lips and her slanting eyes narrowed until they were mere slits as if she was walking blind while she smiled.

It was an expression Sheela had not yet seen on the lynx girl’s face and it looked somehow strange, but for a moment she felt connected to the lynx and a warm feeling spread in her chest. She had to smile too now.

The lynx and the puma walked in silence. The grass stroked the fur of their legs whenever their feet sank onto the yielding, hollowly sounding soil. The sound entirely disappeared in the rustle of the grass they wandered through. They concentrated on the way in front of them, watched the area before them while they slowly went on: The trees were closer together and so it was difficult to see what lay behind them so that they discovered new areas whenever they had passed under the branches of another one of them. It got more and more difficult to go on as the trees grew thicker and thicker so that they sometimes had to climb over the gnarled roots of an old oak or fir to get on.

Jiddy helped Sheela whenever she needed her. Sheela was still much too inexperienced to go on by herself. Her steps were a little bit too clumsy so Jiddy offered her a hand and Sheela gratefully grabbed it whenever she balanced on yet another stone and tried to get back onto secure ground again. But soon the trees grew much too thick and they had to make a detour, approaching the lake’s edge where the trees didn’t grow so dense, but now they had to climb over the fallen trunks and find a way through the undergrowth of bushes and small trees. But after some time it got much easier, light shone through the foliage and once again the forest started to resemble some kind of an old park as they seemed to

approach some kind of a clearing and they went past the line of the trees and stood in full sunlight again.

"Wow!" Sheela said simply and Jiddy nodded in agreement but remained silent.

They were old but hadn't lost anything of their majesty. The moss and the ivy which had overgrown them just seemed to be mere decoration and even the huge trunks which leaned against them fit perfectly into this picture of impressive grandeur and beauty. The totally plain boulders were bigger than Jiddy and Sheela together, their dark gray surface shimmered in their wetness, reflected the light in such a cool grace that they seemed to be perfectly smooth as they didn't even have one pointed corner or sharp edge, all that had never been necessary to be smoothed away because there had never been such a thing. They had been shaped to fit perfectly into one another so that there was not even the smallest space in between any two of them left, they lay one upon another and formed some kind of a circle although there was little of the original shape left to be seen. The walls were still visible and reached high into the sky, competing with the surrounding trees. But most of the huge stones of what once could have been some kind of a tower had fallen down and now lay around the remains of the walls and most of them on a huge heap inside this impressive ruin on which had grown a certain number of small trees whose roots clutched the stones.

The shore of the lake was close by, just like this ruin had once be some kind of a lighthouse or some similar thing so that the impressive remains were on one side surrounded by the forest while on the other the Lake Moonfire's water sloshed lazily against the shore.

"Wow!" Sheela repeated while she covered her eyes with her hand to protected it from the sunlight while she looked up to study the height of these remains. "I have never seen anything like that," Sheela noticed while she admired whatever it had been.

Jiddy just nodded and they stood in silence for a while, the listening to the faint rush of the lake, the chirping of the birds in the surrounding trees, the rustling of the leaves and all the faint other sounds around them while they looked at the ruins and imagined what these could have been once.

After a while they settled down next to one of the walls, just opposite the lake, so that they could admire the peacefulness of this place which made them feel so at ease. While they enjoyed the view of the lake and the few islands which were not that far from them, they ate some hard rolls and dry fruit to fill up their empty bellies.

"So these are the legendary ruins of Lake Moonfire," Sheela noticed.

"Mhm!" Jiddy agreed with a full mouth. "As foir as Oi know there're moiny different on thoi other oilands," she mumbled.

"They're different?" Sheela asked with surprise.

Jiddy nodded while she swallowed the hard pastry of the old roll. "That's the riddle 'bout 'em," she explained. "Everyone of them looks different. Some're so strange that nobody knows what they'd been supposed to be."

"That's why there are so many sorcerers around here?" Sheela asked.

"Hm?" Jiddy replied while she desperately tried to bite her dry roll.

"I met two aboard the ferry," she explained. "They told me that they wanted to study here."

Jiddy shrugged her shoulders.

They continued eating in silence, still watching this marvellous place around them, discovering small flowers in the cracks between the stones, the beautifully shaped leaves of the ivy, the strange smoothness of the stone and the play of the shadow and the light which shone through the branches of the high surrounding trees and onto the boulders, the lake and the islands.

Thick clouds were flying over them, flying past in no time, forced forward by a strong wind that had to rage up there.

Suddenly Sheela started laughing.

Jiddy raised her eyebrows and looked at her companion with bewilderment but Sheela just started to laugh even louder.

"What?" the lynx girl asked.

Sheela still giggled. "Do you always eat like that?"

The lynx' face reflected confusion but then she suddenly understood and quickly brushed her forearm over her muzzle to remove the many crumbs which stuck to her fur. Sheela still sniggered while she was still observing the desperate attempts of the lynx girl to get the crumbs out of her short felted fur. But although Jiddy growled impatiently and brushed with her forearm so fast and hard that it almost hurt it was no use.

The puma was still giggling when Jiddy simply held out her muzzle to her. "Can you remove 'em?" she asked with closed eyes.

Surprised by this request Sheela stopped laughing and studied the lynx girl's face with the closed eyes for a moment. But then she carefully laid her hand on Jiddy's cheek and with the fingers of her other hand she tried to remove the small crumbs of dry bread which stuck there. She noticed that Jiddy's fur was much longer than her own, the typical fur of a northern feline, although it was attached to the skin so firmly that its length could normally never be noticed if someone didn't stroke it with his own hands. The felted strands were sticky and slightly greasy, she could also smell the faintly damp, salty, musky scent of the lynx fur, a strange mixture of all these different scents she had noticed on Jiddy, but except for the dirty and felted surface of the hair, the deeper she got the softer and more cuddly it became. Carefully she picked off the remains of Jiddy's meal.

It was so weak that she first didn't notice it but then she saw the lynx girl's expression of relaxation and delight and in this moment the sound reached her ears too. "Do you like that?" she asked quietly and smiled although Jiddy couldn't see that.

The lynx girl kneeled on all fours in front of the sitting puma girl and she purred hoarsely as Sheela's gentle fingers brushed through the fur of her muzzle. The faint stroking tickled slightly but nevertheless it eased her mind, her muscles relaxed as Sheela's hand pulled all the tension out, removed it with every new stroke and thus she got aware of her sensible skin beneath her chin which Sheela tickled softly.

"I didn't know you could do that," Sheela stated towards the purring lynx. "So there's really a cute little kitty hidden under all these muscles," she teased her ironically. She buried her fingers in the thicker fur beneath the chin and ran it all over the silken hair and eyed the lynx girl who smiled in delight, purred and suddenly rubbed her head against Sheela's arm, ran it all over its length, thus approached her face and then she rose it and suddenly looked straight into Sheela's golden puma eyes, the deep brown of her own shimmering in this noon's bright light.

Sheela opened her mouth to say something but her lips trembled and it seemed like her tongue had swollen so much that she was unable to use it, she caught her breath for a short instant when a cold shiver ran down her spine and gathered in her belly, her nose shivered and then she approached the lynx girl and pressed her own lips onto hers, kissed her until she could feel the lynx' warmth extending into her puma body, whirling into her lungs, pumping into her veins and cramping her heart. Frantically her tongue penetrated Jiddy's mouth, danced around, barely touched Jiddy's while she explored the lynx girl's depth. Her lips clenched around Jiddy's mouth, the hot soft fabric ran over it again and again, caressed it violently, sucked, licked with such a strength that she had to hold the lynx so that she would not be pushed away.

Then she suddenly broke the kiss and the lynx girl suddenly stumbled backwards and fell down on her backside, staring at the other one with widened eyes and opened mouth. "Wow!" Jiddy was just able to say.

Sheela looked down to ground. She trembled and brushed over her mouth with her hand. "Sorry!" she said in a subdued fashion, not daring to look at the girl she had just kissed.

Jiddy just stared at the puma. "Hell, no reason to be sorry 'bout anything'..." She blinked, trying to say something. "'Twas hot"

"I'm sorry!" Sheela apologized lowly once more.

Quickly Jiddy rushed closer and tried to get a look at the confused girl's face. "Sheela, you've done nothin' wrong. You..., you..." She was searching for the right words. "Fuck!" She grabbed Sheela (who yelped in surprise.), pulled her down and kissed her again.

"Could I... Oooh... I, you..." Sheela stammered after Jiddy had broken the kiss but was still holding the puma in her arms. "I wanted to... I guess I must be..."

"Shhh!" Jiddy covered her mouth with her index and cautiously gave her a quick kiss on her cheek, sat her straight up again and then let her go while she sat down cross-legged opposite again and smiled as impishly as a cub who was so proud about its pranks which nobody had discovered yet.

Visibly confused, her mouth opened and closed just like she still intended to say something, Sheela pushed some hair out of her beautiful face. She didn't know what to say or think or do, she just felt the memory of the past pleasure haunting through her limbs.

They finished their meal in silence. Sometimes Sheela looked over to Jiddy from the corner of her eyes but then she noticed that the lynx girl was looking at her too and instantly Sheela turned her head away again and went on chewing on



some dried apple. Afterwards they rested a while as Jiddy was certain that they could reach the ferry's mooring easily from where they were, simply following the lakeside.

The clouds in the sky stretched a little bit and then suddenly tore apart and dyed the land in sunlight, illuminated the lake which reflected the light in an infinite number of shimmering spots as if there was a fire burning in the deep, a mysterious everlasting flame which was just barely covered by the illusion of a stony ground. The two felines stretched out in the sunlight, lay down in the soft grass and looked up at the ruins above them while the sun warmed their limbs and so they dozed off for a while.

But their sleep was troubled yet again by some birds that were fighting noisily and when they raised their heads they noticed three magpies which were just fighting about the buckles of Jiddy's backpack and the lynx instantly jumped to her feet to chase the birds away.

With a moan the lynx stretched and yawned.

Sheela observed her from below.

All of a sudden Jiddy went over to the shore and kneeled down to put her pawn into the water.

"Do you want to swim?" Sheela asked ironically.

Jiddy stood up and slowly went back to Sheela, while she took off her ragged vest.

"What are you going to do?" Sheela asked as she saw that Jiddy pulled off her T-shirt, exposing her muscled scarred back.

"Swimmin'," Jiddy said while she pulled her shorts down.

Sheela was looking at the reddish scars on the lynx' back for a moment, wondering where they might be coming from, before she realized what Jiddy had said. "You really want to swim?" Sheela asked with surprise, instinctively giving the cloud covered sky a look.

"Don't be no feline!" Jiddy teased her, smiling slightly. "A lil' bit of fresh water'd do good to your fur too."

Sheela looked skeptically at Jiddy who kicked away her boots.

"Do you wanna stew in your own juice?" Jiddy asked, suddenly grinning, showing her sharp lynx teeth.

Sheela blushed and tried to look away but the already completely undressed lynx grabbed her waist, let her own muzzle drop into Sheela's cleavage to nibble at its fur.

"Let go!" Sheela cried and burst out laughing. Jiddy's teeth tickled on her breast and Sheela could feel her nibbles getting harder underneath her T-shirt.

"You need a bath!" Jiddy noticed.

Sheela giggled. "I assure you that I am absolutely OK as long as you don't drive me mad."

A strange unfamiliar grin showed on Jiddy's face. "I don't hit on no innocent lynx!"

“You damn...” Sheela cried and playfully threw a stone at Jiddy who dashed off, dodged it and leaped off the shore, went head over heels with a yell until she hit the water with a splash and disappeared under the water’s surface.

The cool water surrounded her, soaked her fur, a lot of air bubbling up around her. She felt the pressure of the water as well as the blood rushing through her veins, pounding inside her head. The water was almost completely clear, offering her a perfect sight down to the lake’s stony ground. Her body drifted up and she broke through the water surface with another short outcry of triumph. She made some strong strokes until she turned herself onto her back and looked back to the shore where Sheela sat.

“Come on! It’s real neat!” Jiddy yelled.

But Sheela just shook her head, but nevertheless sat up, leaned against one of the ruin’s large boulders and carefully observed Jiddy who floated in the water.

Jiddy lay on the water for an instance. She felt like all of her muscles relaxed and her body almost seemed to be weightless for a moment. She could imagine that she could just float away into the cloud covered sky above her. The water lazily splashed against her ears and this was the only sound she was able to hear. She observed the clouds being transformed by the wind.

As she didn’t move she could feel the coldness creep into her body and she turned around and made some slow strokes to get a little bit warmer. Her arms pulled her forward while her feet lazily waved in the water. There were no waves so that she could swim undisturbed and without any effort. She looked around and noticed that she had already gotten far away from the shore where Sheela leaned at the wall, a reddish spot in front of the gray stone behind her.

Jiddy looked forward: There was another very small island just in front of her and she had already covered half of the way so she headed into this direction. The island was very small and rocky, just a few stunned trees grew in the middle of it. While she swam in this direction she just enjoyed the feeling of her muscles moving in the water, slowly driving her forward when her arms ploughed the water. Her muscles slightly twitched beneath her skin from the cold but it wasn’t too unpleasant. It focused her mind onto herself and she got aware of the waves ruffling around her, tickling her fur and waving against her skin. She even felt her tail floating on the water, moving with every stroke she made and for an instance she smiled because it felt like someone was playing with it. But there was nobody except herself, swimming.

She was very close to the island when she felt something on her feet. She did not worry about it but as she tried to make another stroke she could feel that something had wound itself around her ankle. It drew her back, under the water surface. She tried to free herself with strong strokes of her arms but the movement actually drew her closer to whatever had wound itself around her leg. She desperately tried to get it off her feet but she was caught. The movement pulled her under the water. She was so surprised that she swallowed water and panic struck her. She brought her head above the surface, coughed and in the same instant was pulled down again. She kicked around but her left leg was unable to move. The water sloshed around her, she was able to take another

breath until the water broke over her. She couldn't see anything. There was just this something around herself which pulled her down.

She kicked and waved, she felt that she had to breathe right now. Blood rushed to her head, it felt as if it would explode right now. Instinctively she opened her mouth but there was just water, forcing its way into her. Somehow she got aware that she would drown. Her entire body cramped and she tried to force her way to the surface, waving her hands back, to get up. She could feel her hands breaking through the water surface but every movement pulled her down even more. She lost control and hit and kicked. Her chest seemed to explode. Her blood pumped against her skull. She had to get up. She just had to get up.

Suddenly her body relaxed, floating free in the water. The water waved around her. She was motionless, still caught under the water.

Then she cramped, her entire body contracted until it was nothing but a furry ball.

She broke out, every fiber in her body an iron string, her face contorted by an incredible effort, the claws of her paws and feet unsheathed to their full length, her eyes burned and mouth was wide open as if she wanted to cry underwater. But her feet's claws cut through her bond and suddenly she broke through the water's surface again.

She gasped for breath. Her mouth wide open, her teeth exposed as if she wanted to lock her jaw in the air. She trembled and frantically slashed about, trying to stay afloat, no longer swimming in a coordinated fashion.

As she could breathe again, she calmed down slowly.

Waterlilies! Jiddy floated on her back and tried to relax. She hadn't noticed the waterlilies which grew around this island. This was the first time she noticed their flat leaves. One of them must have had wound itself around her ankle. She sighed and tried to take a deep breath but then she had to cough. There was still water in her lungs. She let herself carry by the water.

One of the white beautiful blooms got into her sight. First she didn't care about it, still occupied with getting back to normal. But then an idea struck her mind and carefully she approached one of the flowers, trying not to get caught again.

Sheela got nervous. Jiddy had long since disappeared from her sight. She didn't know either where she had been swimming to. Perhaps she had swum to one of the closer islands but Sheela wasn't sure about that.

She stood up and tried to find Jiddy's light brown shape in the water. But there was no trace of her.

Then she saw something. It had to be Jiddy. A small light spot in the water slowly getting closer to her. Sheela sighed. Jiddy was doing which could have been called the backstroke if it had been performed properly. Therefore she was not so fast. Sheela took another deep breath and slowly made some steps forward, carefully observing the lynx girl in the water.

Jiddy had reached the shore and turned around to walk in the water. The lynx girl rose from the water, her fur dripping and hanging on her skin, emphasizing

the muscled boyish body as well as the small breasts and the firm backside. Jiddy obviously tried to hide something, she did not look at Sheela, but instead looked to the ground while she made the last few steps towards the puma girl.

Jiddy stopped in front of Sheela and sniffed strongly.

Sheela observed her, not knowing what to do. She noticed that the lynx hid one of her paws behind her back.

The smaller girl was dripping, her dark brown hair hang into her face and hid most of it. Her eyes were hardly visible. Jiddy made a strange facial expression, for a short instant she looked towards the horizon where one could see the shape of the Andeleau Mountains far beyond the lake. "I..." She hesitated. "...found that!" she said slowly and her paw emerged from behind her back, carefully holding a waterlily flower. Its pure white petals shone brightly despite the lack of brilliant sunlight. It was still dripping wet and the drops slowly ran down the velvety texture.

When Jiddy looked up there was a shy smile on her lips while Sheela took the flower, blushing terribly. She looked at the beautiful white flower and sometimes raised her eyes so that she could have a look at the nude girl in front of her.

Jiddy sniffed and looked to the ground as if she was unable to face Sheela. "Y'know..."

The clouds in the sky were heavy and gray, building large mountain chains of haze and some of them were already about to rise even higher, pillars of vapor piercing higher into the sky.

"...Fereau sounds nice," Jiddy was finally able to say.

Sheela started to smile happily.

Jiddy looked towards the horizon again and as if an instinct told her to do so, Sheela leaned forward and gave the surprised lynx a gentle kiss of her furry cheek.

Jiddy had been a little bit too optimistic about the way to come as it proved to be much less easy than she had expect it to be. The lake's shore proved to be really marshy and thus they had to make another detour through the forest again. But the further they got into it the more it became a wilderness again and so it slowed them down. As if that had not been bad enough rain set in and it got stronger with every moment. They tried to get through the undergrowth as quickly as possible but Jiddy always had to help Sheela who was not used wandering through this terrain.

The rain was still getting stronger and transformed into what was yet another rainstorm. But finally they broke through the last line of bushes the falling water seemed to be a wall which had been dressed around the forest, a gray impenetrable wall out of heavy drops which fell down with a intense drone while the thunder rolled occasionally, the lightning invisible above the towering mass of clouds. They were completely soaked, their clothes were no use anymore and now their fur was so wet that with every single step they seemed to become heavier and heavier as the water collected upon their skin and robbed them of their remaining warmth.

The lake was a plain of incoming rain, a desert of small waves caused by the uncountable drops, shaping small circular waves which were instantly erased by new incoming drops. It was dark and sloshed against the bank with hostility as if it wanted to overflow, gnawing at the grass covered edge of the island, trying to undermine and wash away the ground. But from the low meadows which marked the end of the forest extended a small wooden jetty and right next to it, partly build upon the land, partly standing on low pillars above the waterline, was a small cabin, hidden behind the curtains of rain.

"Hurry!" Jiddy yelled as loud as she could to drown out the rain and then she dashed off. Despite the additional weight of the backpack she carried she was much faster than the exhausted puma and she slowed down to wait for Sheela who was hardly stumbling anymore. The lynx girl took her by her shoulder and supported her while they headed for the cabin.

Jiddy kicked the door open and they virtually fell into safety. Jiddy slammed the door shut again with her foot and then led the dripping wet puma to something like a bench which she was able to make out against one of the walls. Carefully she sat the trembling puma down and then she tried to investigated their surroundings. The hut had no windows and the few cracks in the walls did not let very much light come through, but because of her lynx eyes she was able to make out at least the outlines of their low shelter: There were two benches at the edge of the wall, a small fireplace in the middle, the other half of the hut was separated by a thin wooden wall and there was nothing but a small opening leading into that part. There was nothing but a some kind of a wooden bed which occupied almost the entire part. The only sound from the outside was the constant rush of the rain on the roof.

Jiddy pulled a face when she noticed that there was no wood for a fire. Sheela was shivering from the cold and instinctively she pulled her clothes closer around herself.

“Don’t!” Jiddy intervened. “You’ve gotta get out of ’em!” And before Sheela fully understood, Jiddy had already thrown off her backpack, stood at her side and pulled at her sweater. For a moment the puma tried to resist this treatment but Jiddy’s pull was anything but gentle and soon the lynx girl had unclothed the shivering puma.

Then she started to rummage around in her backpack, observed by the sniffing puma girl and pulled out some piece of cloth. “Dry yourself with that!” she ordered non too gently.

Although Sheela was no lynx, her feline eyes were able to identify the cloth as a shirt. “But...”

Jiddy jumped to her feet and grabbed the puma girl who yelped in surprise and pressed a very wet kiss onto her lips. “No protest!” she said after she had broken the kiss again and let the puma alone with the shirt while she started to rummage around in her backpack again.

While Sheela dried herself as good as she could Jiddy took out a candle and searched for a flint and a small piece of darkened iron ore. It took her quite some time before she was able to set the moist wick afire but finally the candle was burning and spread a little bit of warming light throughout the cabin. It was not until then that Jiddy took off her dripping clothes as well.

The two dripping wet, naked felines looked at each another, eyed their messy fur, their completely soaked hair and suddenly Sheela started giggling and after a while Jiddy joined in with a very low, almost inaudible, weak laughter that seemed to come from the deepest bottom of her chest.

“Seems like you got a bath anyway...,” Jiddy stated.

Sheela threw the wet shirt at her.

She lit her cig and inhaled as much of the spiced smoke into her lungs as possible, until her chest was warmed by the sparkling sensation of the strange tobacco.

“You are smoking?” Sheela asked a little bit surprised.

Jiddy looked at her fag. “Yeah,” she stated thoughtfully. “Just found it, I thought I had no more. Haven’t gotten any since I left Kastania...”

They fell silent while Jiddy filled her lungs with the pungent smoke. After a moment she held it out to Sheela but the puma girl quickly shook her head and instead observed how Jiddy went on smoking.

“Now what do you think?” Sheela asked. She actually lay underneath the sleeping bag, barely visible beneath the cloth. Just her head and her tail poked out of it. Her tail wagged in slow, lazy movements.

Jiddy, sitting with crossed legs at the edge of the poor bed, blinking because of the sparse light of their only candle, took another puff and then blew the blue

smoke around her muzzle so that it lingered around her head. "I was thinkin' 'bout the ferry," she said.

Sheela blinked and waited for more. "What's there to puzzle about," she asked after Jiddy did not go on. "I have no doubt, it'll arrive soon..."

The lynx girl wordlessly smoked her cig without any reply, while the puma watched her. The only sound was the rare rustling when Sheela moved underneath her cover. Suddenly Jiddy turned around and looked at the puma. Their eyes met.

"What?" Sheela asked.

Jiddy took a last puff from her cig and then threw the end simply on the floor, leaned slightly backwards and let one of her paws reach out under the cloth and started to brush the fur of Sheela's belly. Very lightly her fingers ran across the soft light fur.

Sheela just let her proceed, enjoying the gentle touch which seemed to wipe off the tension of the cold she had felt before. Beneath the lynx' warm pad her muscles relaxed and even though the touch tickled slightly it was just the kind of thing she needed. She sighed quietly while the hand moved over her belly like Jiddy had to explore it anew. It was this strange behavior of the lynx girl which charmed her the most, because every time Jiddy did something it seemed to be like the first time again. Or the last? She could not tell the difference.

Unwillingly she gasped lightly when Jiddy took hold of one of her breasts, cupped it with her paw and moved it in circles over her chest, while she enforced her hold bit by bit until her fingers squeezed the touchy fabric hard and massaged her breast with increasing strength.

Jiddy grinned toothily and let go growl.

The puma closed her eyes and let herself be carried away by the rough caress. She was aroused again, her nipple was hard, trapped beneath the rough skin of Jiddy's paw which rubbed and pressed into it, while the warmth of her hand increased the heat of her chest until it seemed to melt and the hand shaped it anew. Shivering slightly she drifted off, her sleepiness added to this feeling and finally she felt like the sheets wrapped around her and pulled tighter until she was completely trapped inside, safe and hot.

Her line of thought was interrupted by the cool touch of lips upon hers and she opened her eyes just to see into Jiddy's, slanting, dark brown, almost black ones, reflecting the dim light of the room as there was nothing else to be seen.

Jiddy gently explored the smooth fabric of her mouth, let her fine lips run over hers, smoothing the mouth with her saliva and then she broke the kiss, instead rubbed her cheeks against hers, a feline proof of affection which Sheela was strangely enjoying because it was so gentle. In the meantime the lynx' paw never let her breast go.

"I can't believe you haven't had enough yet," Sheela whispered saucily.

"Uh?" For an instant Jiddy looked at her with a strange expression of lack of understanding, but then she did not seem to care anymore and kissed Sheela again but this time the puma girl gave in and joined the kiss, opened her mouth and their tongues slowly tasted one another, coiling around themselves. The

rough surfaces gently rubbed one another and their breaths mixed to a single one until they drowned in one another, their lips opening, closing again and again, alternately kissing and french kissing.

Sheela did not even notice how Jiddy's hand let go of her breast, wandered through the fur of her belly, gently caressing its curves, her side, her legs, then her belly again and finally brushed through her fluffy pubic hair and ... She jerked when the cool fingers touched her sensitive, hot labia as a wave of pleasure was suddenly flowing through her and she gasped so that Jiddy had to break the kiss. But the lynx did not let go of her, carefully teasing her sex with her fingers while she smiled at the quivering girl who had closed her eyes and just enjoyed how the other girl pleased her.

As the puma constantly turned her head, there was no use kissing her anymore and thus Jiddy turned towards her chest and started to kiss her breast, casually licking the erected nipples so that this just added to Sheela's ecstasy. It was as if a whirl had opened inside her and everything spun around it, dizzying her and pulling her deeper into that ocean of carnal lust. But suddenly it exploded into a fountain of joy, caused by fulfilment of an unspoken desire, and carried her to a new level when Jiddy's fingers carefully pushed at her opening, shoved the labia aside, stroking them while passing through until her throbbing inner muscles could welcome the gentle intruders which did not rest but instantly started to spread new feelings which seemed to Sheela like a whole new dimension was suddenly open for her as she plunged into her own abdomen and was suddenly surrounded by warm waves caused by Jiddy's careful caress. She let herself float, panting occasionally, while Jiddy's fingers stroke the inside of her sex, up and down, back and forth, while the juice flowed around them they pressed against the wet surface of the inner muscles which clamped around them with every beat of Sheela's heart.

But the lynx did not stop. As she had only inserted two of her fingers, her thumb and her index were still unoccupied. First her thumb slightly pressed down on her hidden clitoris and suddenly Sheela opened her eyes wide as she was suddenly torn out of her swaying bliss by a new peak of pleasure. The sensitive knot was instantly set afire by the careful touch even though the thumb was just stroking the labia where the clitoris was hidden underneath. But with her skilled fingers Jiddy quickly pushed the lips aside and very lightly her index and her thumb got hold of the clitoris. This touch threw the puma upwards, it radiated through her like a brightly burning sun had come to live in the innermost of her body and now she was flying in its blinding light which surrounded her with its warm joy. She tossed and turned from the intensity of her pleasure and it was Jiddy who kept her in place just as she took care that the puma would not get lost too soon.

The lynx was now sucking at her breast, especially her hard nipples, licking them with her rough, wet tongue, while two fingers, forcefully held by the tightly swollen labia, caressed the inside of her opening and the other two carefully fingered her clitoris, softly trapping it in between and gliding over it as it was moistened by her freely flowing juice which could no longer be held back. Sheela



was totally overcome by now, she was falling, floating and flying at the same time. Every fiber of her body was in complete harmony with the pleasure that was offered to her and soon Jiddy could feel like the inner muscles waved faster around her fingers, the labia seemed to be swelling more with every heartbeat and the clit shivered in its hold just like her breast rose faster, according to her breath. So the lynx quickened her pace, so that her fingers fully slipped in and out of the puma's opening, caressing her labia even stronger, offering stronger resistance to her inner muscles while her clit was squeezed harder so much that it was almost painful but at the same time felt so wonderful that it was like a glowing ray that pierced her body.

Her eyes wide open, her arms around the lynx, she suddenly took a deep breath and when she exhaled it transformed into a growl which build inside her body which seemed to contract and suddenly she bucked as her climax hit her like lightning. Her abdomen and her chest burst in a fountain of joy, her entire mons spasmed around Jiddy's hand, her breast rocked on her body which was thrown upwards as she bucked. Blindly she stared at the incredible light that exploded inside her while the shock waves let her quiver and moan in total bliss, her entire body had been torn apart by the intensity of her feelings and impressions and while she was still enjoying the after shocks it felt as if her mind-bit by bit- rejoined her body again until she was lying in a poor bed in an equally poor room, dimly lit by a single candle, empty and weak but indescribably happy as well while Jiddy looked at her with a weak smile. She put on a wan smile in return.

Gently Jiddy nuzzled against her breast, caressing the voluptuous shapes and enjoying their feverish heat as it radiated the joy of satisfaction. The lynx went on until her cheeks glowed equally hot and she could not resist shivering as her heated blood spread throughout her body, drawing lines throughout her cold limbs, freeing them of their tension and instead build up this specific undeniable need inside her chest but although she heard Sheela's breath getting slower and less agitated Jiddy was certain about feeling a last rest of resistance. Casually the lynx licked the breasts as her muzzle passed by them.

Sheela just lay back, still living off the afterglow of her climax. Jiddy's random caresses were just fulfilling her last desires. She did not open her eyes when she felt Jiddy moving on her, lying down between her spread legs and the puma girl really enjoyed the closeness of this strange body on her which seemed to lack every trace of femininity but in spite of its muscles and hard bones there was something beautifully soft about it which was just what she had longed for and thus she did not hesitate when she felt Jiddy's small breast settled on her chest and she wrapped her arms around the lynx. Jiddy was a little bit surprised by this embrace but anything but unreceptive. As the warmth started to gather in between their bodies, Sheela's hands slowly started running over Jiddy's bony shoulder blades, wandered over the lines of scars of her muscled back and as they approached Jiddy's backside Sheela could feel as the lynx girl's heart started beating faster. Shyly her fingers ran over the small, firm, round backside while Jiddy's lips searched for hers and willingly Sheela gave in to this attempt and they

kissed softly with short, shy, gentle movements, renewing their kiss again and again. Meanwhile her hands wandered up and down the lynx' backside.

"You're beautiful," Jiddy mumbled. Her half opened eyes glowed with a strange light. Suddenly she moved a little bit upwards, displayed her muzzle, her neck and her chest to Sheela whose eyes wandered over the strange landscape of muscles until her small breast of the lynx stroke against her chin. The thick, rich fur of the upper chest smelled strongly, a foreign fragrance she had never smelt before, thrilling, charming and dangerous like the view from a high cliff.

Cautiously with quivering lips her mouth approached the small breast and she gave one a light kiss and Jiddy moaned like every desire of hers had been fulfilled.

It were her instincts that woke her up and she was up and ready even before she understood what was going on... Flames blazed around wooden walls, the roof was already completely on fire, the smoke swirled thickly around her, hurt in her lungs as it seemed to fill them up completely. The heat was unbearable, she felt like her fur curled because of it while her skin hurt like it had been burnt already. The backpack was just about to catch fire and she threw it aside with all her strength, jumped to her feet.

"SHEELA!" She cried as loud as she could but the puma girl which had been lying at her side did not move a bit.

"SHEELA!" She cried as loud as she could, to drown out the blaze around her and she shook the puma girl just to realize that Sheela had already lost consciousness. She growled in anger, fear and pain.

The light of the fire cut into her eyes, it hurt just as much as the smoke and she heard the cracking of the beams the cabin was made of and instinctively she knew that there was not much time left. She kneeled down and grabbed the puma girl, drew her closer and then with a cry heaved her onto her shoulder and even though she was stumbling for a moment from the bigger puma girl's weight she was able to keep her up there. With her free paw she grabbed her backpack and then she tried to get out of the door as quickly as she could.

She coughed and panted from all the smoke and it got worse every moment, the fire crawled down the walls and sparks flew all around them, she heard the crack as the first beam broke apart and collapsed onto one of the benches. The flying sparks fell down on them and burned their fur and skin but Jiddy did not care about that, she tried with all her strength to get through the narrow opening in between the two sections of the cabin and when she finally got through she heard the noise as another beam broke apart and it fell down where their bed had been just a moment before. Everything seemed to fall apart and when she reached the door, gasping, her mind spinning from the smoke, it was already burning as well but she did not hesitate for a second and kicked it open, even though she felt her furless pad instantly engulfed by fire and she stumbled out of the burning cabin whose blaze illuminated the night.

The flames danced highly in the air and Jiddy with Sheela on her shoulder stumbled forwards and then fell to the ground, trying to catch her breath which whistled in her chest.

When she turned around there seemed to be nothing of the wooden hut left, there was just a blaze, a swirl of flames and suddenly everything fell apart. With a crash the last beams broke apart and the roof collapsed so that the flames were forced apart for a moment as a swarm of sparks rose into the sky.

With her mouth wide open she stared at the inferno. One of her paws still held the puma girl, the one one was cramped around the straps of her backpack.

Slowly she turned around again and clumsily she sat up. Then she noticed the unconscious puma at her side again and instantly reached out for her muzzle to check her breath: It was weak but steady.

When she rose awkwardly to her feet, still somehow dizzy, she noticed the shape in the darkness which looked at them: She needed a moment as her eyes had to adapt to the darkness but slowly she was able to distinguish something, the big shape which was strangely illuminated by the the distant flames which seemed to dance over his body, his muscles, his wounds which stood out between his brown fur. Slowly he started to approach them, the blade of a knife reflecting the light of the burning hut.

“You...” she snarled. “YOU!” And the word transformed into a growl that escaped her throat, it was much more animal than anything else. Teeth and claws exposed she leaped forward.



“Sheela!”

Her eyelids quivered slightly.

“Sheela!”

A wet cloth ran carefully over her forehead, appeased the burn of her skin for a moment. The moist cloth washed gently all over her face and she moaned a little bit in return. The wet cloth returned to her forehead and remained there.

“Drink that!” Someone raised her head a little bit and she could feel that a small tin cup was put to her lips and fresh, cool water filled her mouth and she swallowed thirstily as her throat was dry and sore. She choked on the water and coughed and instantly the tin cup was taken from her lips and she was raised a little bit further.

Weakly she opened her eyes and although her vision was somehow blurred she was able to recognize the shape of the lynx girl. “Don’t tell me this is because of the night we spent together...” she whispered hoarsely. Her throat felt like a rasp and she had to cough again.

Jiddy smiled weakly. “The was a fire. We got outta there just in time.”

“Oh...” She blinked while her dizzy mind needed a moment to grasp what that meant. But this was the perfect explanation why she felt like she had almost choked to death while her skin felt like... having been burnt, yes! She looked at Jiddy and as her eyes slowly got better she was able to see that the lynx looked really bad, her fur was partly burnt and partly covered by soot just like her hair, her clothes were torn apart, were completely blackened because of the fire and looked even more miserable than ever, but she had also received several wounds, cuts and grazes and bloodstains stuck to her fur.

“You’re hurt!” Sheela stated.

“No, it’s nothin’,” Jiddy replied quickly. “It’s nothin’.”

Clumsily Sheela tried to sat up.

“Slow, slow,” Jiddy said while she helped her as best as she could.

She still felt somehow dizzy and she was weak of course but despite this there she would have expected to feel worse. Unlike the lynx she did not seem to have received any serious injury. “Could I get some more water?” she asked.

“Yeah, sure!” Jiddy answered and filled her tin cup again and handed it over to the puma girl.

Sheela emptied it instantly and handed it back to Jiddy. “How could that happen?”

Jiddy’s tail twitched. “I dunno! Maybe ‘cause of the candle...”

“No!” Sheela contradicted. “It died down even before we have fallen asleep.”

“I dunno!” Jiddy said shortly and turned away to put the tin cup into her backpack again.

Sheela eyed the lynx girl for a moment: Her movements were hasty, her entire body was tense, the powerful muscles of hers poked out of the messy fur, her ears twitched nervously and although she tried to calm it down her tail trembled just like it wanted to wag stronger, much stronger. “What happened?” Sheela asked with concern.

“Nothin’, nothin’” Jiddy rummaged around in her backpack and her movements looked strangely uncontrolled like she did not even know what she was actually doing there, like she had never done this before. She quivered.

“But I can see that something is not alright with you,” Sheela said cautiously.

Jiddy kept silent.

“What happened?” Sheela asked as carefully as possible. “You can tell me!”

“’s OK,” Jiddy said somehow strangely, her hoarse voice trembled slightly but it sounded like she wanted to calm herself as much as she wanted to calm Sheela. “I... I... It’s... over! I mean: We’re save...!”

The puma girl looked at the kneeling lynx partly in confusion, partly in concern. “Are you sure you are alright?” she asked once more. “You are hurt.”

“No, it’s OK,” Jiddy answered promptly. “It’s just the... tension.”

Sheela eyed her for another while. “If you say so...” she replied then and blinked, then slowly she fully sat up again and looked around, noticing for the first time that they were in the wood at a certain distance from the shore and the mooring as well. “Where are we? Don’t you think we should go to the berth again? If a ferry comes by they might possibly help us...”

“No!” She had blurred it out even before she had understood it herself. Instinctively she had jumped to her feet as well and now looked at Sheela in all her miserable condition, her eyes wide open, her face hidden beneath a cover of soot. When she realized that she stared directly into the inquiring eyes of Sheela, she turned her head away as quickly. “I... I... mean... I...” She looked at her empty paws, once again her tail was wagging strongly, now left of any control.

“But Jiddy we have to...” Sheela tried to contradict but then she stopped suddenly. There was a scent surrounding Jiddy that she had not noticed before: Below the smell of soot and burned fur there was unmistakable scent of fear.

“What was going on?” Now the puma girl’s voice was slightly trembling too. The lynx’ behavior was too chaotic, too uncontrolled.

But Jiddy did not answer anything just breathed strongly, starring at her paws.

“What happened?” Sheela asked with emphasis, slowly losing control. Something had happened, she had understood that by now and worst of all Jiddy was afraid of telling her. Clumsily Sheela stood up, her mind was spinning at first, she could feel pain in her chest but finally she was upright and noticed that Jiddy was elsewhere: The lynx’ angular face was slowly contorting.

She grabbed the smaller lynx girl by her arms and shook her. “What happened, Jiddy? Tell me!”

Jiddy made no attempt to resist Sheela shaking her, but she was totally tense, not even one limb of her moving while she was shaken. Sheela could feel the incredible tension beneath her fingers but what was worse that Jiddy forcefully avoided Sheela’s eyes. She could see that the lynx’ jaw was locked.

“JIDDY!” Sheela cried, there were tears flowing down her cheek, although she did not know why. She had lost every last bit of control now, everything that had held her back. She was still feeling weak and exhausted, but most of all she was afraid, terribly afraid. “Jiddy...” she begged and then suddenly she let the lynx go

and ran past her, heading for the lakeside as fast as she could. First she stumbled but then she got faster.

“SHEELA!” Jiddy cried after her. “SHEELA! WAIT!” And then she dashed after the panicked puma, trying to catch up with her but Sheela was much faster than ever.

The low branches of the trees slapped into her face, the undergrowth tore at her burned fur, tears from her irritated eyes ran down her cheeks, but somehow she had the strength to run on and she had run out of the forest and headed for the burned cabin while Jiddy was still fighting with the undergrowth and when the lynx finally reached the meadows of the shore she just heard Sheela’s cry and a helpless wail escaped the lynx.

Sheela had first looked at the burned cabin and she had needed a certain time to notice that something had changed in her surroundings. But then she had seen it, although it had been hid away between the trees.

There was a cry.

Jiddy did not even pay any attention to the remains of the hut and had instantly headed for the spot where she knew that it had to be coming from.

Sheela had fallen to her knees and stared at it in total disbelief, sometimes a short sob escaping her throat: It was hastily made, somehow absurdly awkward and helplessly naïve, but it was recognizable as what it was. A small heap of stones with a single erected stone on the top where two leather straps with a shamanic pendant hang. There was still fresh earth lying all around.

“Oh, Goddess...” Sheela stammered weakly, while her trembling hand reached out for the pendant on the stone. She took it in her paws.”Rustlan... Rustlan...”

Tears were flowing freely down her cheeks while she stared at the clumsy grave in total disbelief until she trembled shortly like she had to cough. She had shut her mouth with her hand and then she was twitching again, heavy sobs forced their way upwards inside her and then she started to cry, her entire body shivering with grief, intense pain cut into her, stirred up whatever was held at bay inside her and she cried painfully, trembling and shaking from the cold that welled up inside her and all that surrounded her died away in a blur, like it all fell apart and shattered on the ground around her so that the sherds cut into her and made her bleed. Her hands had closed firmly around the pendant that she pressed against her chest, while she quivered and shook from the power of her mourning. She was totally oblivious to anything around her while she cried.

“Sheela, I wasn’t...” The lynx’ voice was trembling

“NO!” Her cry was louder than anything, all her pain transformed into a single word and she stared at the lynx, her eyes shimmered stronger than ever, reflecting all the light due to her tears that flowed down into the fur of her cheek. She trembled while she stared at the lynx who just shook and trembled, burned and bloodstained as she was.

“What have you done...?” Sheela wailed. “What... What...?” She could not speak on as tears were forcing their way upwards again and she almost collapsed when her grief hit her like a tidal wave.



Sheela cried on and the lynx just stood there, tense, her face contorted in pain and unable to utter anything but a low growl the crying puma could not hear.



The heart-rending honks echoed over the mist clad water and disappeared into the direction of the horizon where the red glowing sun slowly sunk down. Now the cold mists would occupy the lake so that none of its uncountable islands would be visible anymore, hidden somewhere behind the white cloaks of an early night.

The figure at the rail, one of the few passengers aboard the wooden ferry, stood motionless. Lost in its thoughts the person looked out into the foggy twilight, motionless. The deck of the ship was just slightly rocking. The lake's waters were still, just lazily sloshing against the planks of the ship, a slow, melancholic sound. All the other passengers were inside the small cabin as this evening promised to be cold. Most of them were already sleepy due to their travels during daytime, the few conversations were quiet and trivial. They were barely able to stay awake so they just chatted without caring about what they were just saying or even caring about who was there with them. The captain's husband, some fat wolf, had made some sandwiches and handed them out to those who were still willing to eat something.

The ferry was slowing down as it moved carefully through a strait between two small islands. The ship was as silent as the surrounding lake, there were few sounds left, just the sloshing water seemed to remain. There were no birds, nor any other animals left, there was no wind and so Lake Moonfire was buried underneath a cloth of silence which seemed to cover all its mysteries and beauties. The few ruins on the islands were just as quiet as the surrounding land, a part of it which kept no secret except its mere existence but after all why Lake Moonfire existed was a secret too, so there seemed to be nothing special about the stony features of some of the islands, especially not in this dusk's reddish twilight.

The sun had already set, it had disappeared behind the mountains on the horizon and nothing remained but its powerful glow which dyed the thick clouds red and those transformed this twilight into threads of rose, red and purple which clad the sky. Suddenly some of the clouds were torn apart and exposed a blood red horizon which glowed with the sun's unreal light before the gap was closed again by a slowly flowing cloud which covered it with its rose mist.

The long light brown hair of her ponytail fluttered in the feeble airflow of the moving ship while she stood still, observing the spectacle of the clouds at the horizon. Even the closer islands were now nothing but dark shadows which had lost all of their features, the darkness had already swallowed them and it would just be a matter of time before it would come out of the forests on the islands and spread to cover the whole lake. But for now there was still enough light to illuminate the lake which reflected the strange glow of the sky.

She leaned against the rail, a puma girl dressed in a wide woollen sweater and long denim trousers, a small bag lay on the floor next to her. Motionlessly she looked into the sky where the ferry slowly got away from.

"Nice view, isn't it?" somebody asked.

"Yes!" she answered without moving.

They paused while the newcomer approached the rail and leaned against it. "I could never get tired of this," she noticed. It was the captain, a slender roe in thick leather clothes. She smiled gently at her passenger. "You should go inside. It'll be cold."

"Thanks!" she answered. "But I don't want to..." Her voice just died away.

The captain scrutinized her from her position. "If you say so... I just wanted to warn you. The last nights have been unusually cold."

"Yes, they were!" Sheela stated. A breeze caught her hair and pushed it into her face. Slowly she raised her arm and removed the strands again. "Yes, they were!" she mumbled with a toneless voice.

The roe captain screwed up her eyes. "Are you alright?" she asked carefully but as warmly as possible.

Sheela turned her face around and a faint smile flitted over her face. "Thank you! Yes, I think so."

"Good!" The captain nodded. "Good!" And she stood up to full height again, still nodding. "In this area there's a lot that could happen to a girl like you..."

First she just smiled again, but her smile got broader and broader and she laughed, her whole face radiated a strange, unexplainable amusement. But her laughter died away as quickly as it had come. "Yes, yes... There could happen a lot... To a girl..., especially like me!" Her hand closed around a small shamanic pendant that hang on a leather strap around her neck. "I better get inside." She took her small bag and walked away.

The roe nodded and looked after her for a moment.

End of Chapter 7

