The Story of Lady Luk

Fiona Sinecona

Why is it whenever you read someone else’s story that it makes you feel like your story is so boring and undeserving of being written about? My uncle used to say that changelings had the greatest stories to tell because we’ve lived so many other people’s lives for them. Well, I decided that I would be the one to change all of that and write about not only my story but my family as well because if it wasn’t for them, I wouldn’t be who I am today. Plus, whom better to write about characters in a story than someone who lives so many different ones every single day of her life. That and this is a way that I can remind myself of who I really am and where I come from. So, here it goes.

This is the story of Fiona Sinecona, the daughter of two wonderfully curious parents that taught me to always look beyond the surface and find the treasure behind it. And of course, the irony of a little changeling girl having to disguise herself every time she had to leave her home, wasn’t lost on me, even at that age. Let me explain. In my world, changelings are considered a dishonest and untrustworthy race among the elves, dwarves, humans, etc. Especially humans. This stigma came from many of my kind who decided to embrace this “blessing” and live like kings, no matter the consequences. Many of them got a rush from it every time one of their schemes worked in their favor. Unfortunately, for the rest of us, it put a target on our back. Even if we were just minding our own business and living a normal, peaceful life away from everyone else. Like my grandfather and his family.

As granddad explains it, he never grew up in one place because of the stigma that came with being a changeling. So they were always on the move, never staying in one place too long. But it was when they made camp in the Wilds of the Black Maere that haunted him the most. He would wake up in the middle of the night reliving the night he lost everything. See, earlier that day, a group of drunks had stumbled into one of the hunter’s traps and got caught. Of course, the man was released, unharmed, and he and his friends were sent on their merry way. Of course, this wasn’t anything new. They were used to random travelers, hunter/gatherers, and bandits coming across them all the time, especially when near a town or village. Most of the time, some crazy story about spirits living in the forest and them barely getting away was told in some tavern and no one would think twice about it. This was mainly because one of the trackers would always find them and get them drunk. This would allow others around them to believe everything coming out of their mouth was nothing but the ramblings of a drunk. But that was rare and even when it did happen, they normally would just pick up and leave before anything could come of it. But this time was different because instead of them going to the local tavern to tell their “heroine” story of how they got away from a group of ghost-like creatures before they could skewer them up like a hog over an open fire, they went directly to the local Reeve and his guards. Thankfully, he thought them nothing but drunks that were just seeing things and sent them on their merry way.

But it wasn’t until word got to him later that same day that General Devonte Sinecona, would be traveling through the village tomorrow on his way home to Porte Vessi after 40 years of service to the Imperial Army. Of course, the Reeve didn’t want to take any chances, so he decided to send one of his scouts into the Wilds to see if there could be any truth to the drunk’s story. And of course, the scout found my granddad’s family picking up about to leave and told the Reeve of everything he saw.

Well, the Reeve didn’t want to take any chances if the general came across them along the way and if something should happen, he would be relieved of his position or worse. So, he had his men spread a rumor around that these “ghosts” were nothing but changelings in the forest and that one of their scouts came across some plans that involved them killing everyone in the village. Once everyone was dead and replaced, they would do the same to the General on his way back to Porte Vesse. That these “monsters” wouldn’t stop until everyone holding a position of power was killed and replaced, including the Royal Family.

This got the entire village up in a frenzy, so much so that later that evening, a mob of angry villagers found his entire clan before they could finish packing and attacked them. That night, his sister, Luk, was awoken by a beautifully lit woman with long-braided fox-red hair in an emerald, green dress. She explained later to him that this woman, this goddess, told her to grab her brother and go hide in the woods near an old hollowed-out tree covered in hollies. That’s when Luk woke up and thought this was nothing but a weird dream until she felt something in her hand and saw that it was a holly leaf with two red berries attached to it. Wide-eyed and scared, she did as the woman had told her and woke him up and ran, not looking back. She found the tree not far from their campgrounds and hid. Her brother, tired and confused, wanted to know what was going on. Quietly she explained what was going on as she was looking out into the darkness. Luka being ten and just thinking his sister messing with him, tried to remove himself from Luk’s vise-like grip. Suddenly, they both could see what looked like torches coming their way until what looked like the roots of the tree started to cover up the hole of the tree. Leaving them in the darkness of the tree, allowing only air and some light in from between the roots. The light from the torches were coming closer and the murmuring of angry voices were getting louder. Then suddenly, what sounded like a stampede of wild horses, ran past them and into their campsite. It was horrible. Screams of anger and death echoed throughout the hollowness of the tree. The bright light of crackling fire spilled through the darkness, almost blinding them. They both screamed to stop, as they tried to fight their way out. Suddenly a voice yelled in their ears to be quiet as a group of men suddenly stopped in front of the tree. Tears ran down their eyes, and as a mix of terror and rage rose within them, the group was called back to help carry things back to the village. After that, all they could hear was the laughter and congratulations of everyone for a job well done as they slowly headed back from wherever they came from.

As the laughter faded into the darkness and the fires slowly burnt themselves out, the siblings decided it was time to leave the tree and see if anyone else had survived. Pushing, scratching, and screaming at the roots to let them out, they found themselves stuck, tired, and alone in the cold, dark night. Finding themselves exhausted from the whole ordeal, they fell asleep in one another’s embrace. As the light of the dawn flowed slowly into the darkness of the tree and gently caressed their faces, the roots began to remove themselves from the opening of the tree. And as the light began to flood over them, Luk began to slowly open her eyes as she was awoken by the same warm voice that saved them from earlier that night. As she raised her hand over her eyes to block the light, she could make out what looked to be the goddess herself, only this time she had armor on and a weapon by her side. As the goddess raised a finger toward her mouth and a blink of an eye, she reached her arms out to help Luk leave the emptiness of the tree. Looking down at Luka, still asleep, she quietly exited into the embracing tattooed arms of this long-braided fox-red-haired woman, burying her face into the stomach of her rescuer. Tears again running down her face, she turned and noticed a man removing his armor and weapons before crawling into the tree and passing the still sleeping Luka off to two other armed men. The gurgling croak of a raven made her instinctively turn her head toward the sound. As her eyes fixated on it picking an eye out of one of her clansmen, rage filled her entire being as she vowed to bring the same horror down upon each and every person involved in the deaths of her clan, no matter what.

As the siblings were walking, Luk asked her rescuer what her name was and where were they going. She called herself Caeiree and that they were being taken to a safe place just down the road. A few minutes later, they hear some drunken men were singing, laughing, and talking loud around the bend. Caeiree stopped walking after feeling Luk’s grip get tighter and her wide eyes tearing up. Luk recognized the voices of the men who were a part of the attack and murder of her clan. Luka told me he didn’t remember this part because he was still asleep in Caeiree’s arms. But of what he was told by his sister, Caeiree told the others to walk ahead of them just in case something would happen. And without a word, the men did just that. Luk informed him that with everything going on, she didn’t remember taking another form as they continued walking. As the men got closer to them, they were curious about these four-armed guards with two children with them and stopped to ask who they were. And without thinking of something to say, she heard Caeiree say that we were escorting the General’s niece and nephew back to the campsite outside of the village. And the reason the little girl was upset after coming across what looked like a massacre in the nearby clearing. That’s when one of the men knelt towards her and said that she didn’t have to worry about those bad people anymore. That they had taken care of them before they could hurt them, their uncle, or anyone else ever again. Caeiree asked to explain a bit further, and just like a proud idiot, he told them everything.

About what was told to them by the Reeve’s men, what they had done, and how they were all being rewarded for their bravery in keeping the kingdom safe from these monstrous assassins. Luk told him later that it took everything she had not to grab the dagger hanging from Caeiree’s belt and stab him right then and there. Caeiree could see this and commented that they were very brave for what they did and that the Reeve was right for making the right decision to deal with them before they were to come through. She also prompted Luk to tell the men thank you for keeping them all safe, which was surprising to her at the time. She did so reluctantly and after the men, feeling smug for what they did, left them. Luk looked at her wide-eyed and asked her why she said those horrible things. Caeiree said that sometimes you need to look death right in the eye and smile. Especially when death is in the form of a little girl. That they would get their revenge later when they were ready.

Luka woke up a bit confused about where he was, especially since he was moving backward. Still a little groggy, he sat up to see this beautiful red-head with emerald-green eyes looking back at him and smiling. He found himself surprisingly calm and unafraid about the whole situation for some reason. Maybe it was because he saw how calm Luk was looking up at him. Caeiree’s smile was so warm, and her voice was so calm and harmonious in his ears. She explained everything to him in a way that made sense to him. After a few more minutes of walking, they came to a home off the beaten path where they saw a stalky dwarven woman with ashy-red hair in a burgundy and grey hooded cloak loading some vegetables into the back of a wagon. The clanging of jade beads around her neck could be heard as she turned around towards them. With her hands on her hips and a smile on her face, she greeted everyone and said she was ready to go whenever we were. Luka and Luk were very confused at this moment about what was going on, so Caeiree knelt to look both of them in the eye and explained that this was Mama Ashbraid, and she was going to take care of them from now on. That she was going to take them with her to the capital city of Porte Vessi and take care of them from now on. Somehow, they both understood, and thanked each of their rescuers with a strong embrace before being helped up onto the wagon. Knowing that the children would miss them all, Caeiree prayed over them before placing a medallion around their necks. Telling them that if they were ever in trouble, all they needed to do is hold onto this, think of any of them and they would be right by their side. No matter what. This brought a smile to everyone’s face and a tear to Luks’s eyes as the wagon began to pull away, both children not taking their eyes off of their rescuers, their heroes. As they slowly rode off to their new home, Luk remembered she still had the Hollie leaf with her. When she went to grab it, she felt something else instead…Caeiree’s small dagger. Surprised about what she found, she looked up to say something, but they were gone. Nothing but some trees, the little home they just left, and a few birds flying over them. This made her smile for the first time, knowing that they were saved by a goddess and her men.