

The Maiden and The Dragon

Listen here, listen here, my dear friends, for I will share with you the tale that curses our tribe to this very day. The tale that is passed down from ancestor to ancestor and with the wisdom coming from them. The tale that causes us to give away one of our kind to preserve all the rest. Yes, this story takes place long ago, long before your great-grandfather was born. It revolves around misunderstandings, revenge, and the consequences we live with because of them. Men, women, and children, please listen as I tell you the tale of the maiden and the dragon.

The story begins with the Tamir tribe, a hardy group of natives living with no one but themselves. Nestled on a long island in the middle of the Gareen Ocean, the Tamirians lived alongside the rhythm of nature. They knew exactly what season made fruits the ripest and when to stock up for upcoming chills. They memorized all the best fishing spots and which plants were poisonous and which were not. Yes, the Tamir tribe lived in harmony with nature, and nothing has broken this beautiful time.

However, this all changed when the maiden arrived.

She came to the Tamir tribe with nothing but her boat and the clothes she wore. Curly hair, the color of a morning sunrise, spouted from atop her head and ended at her shoulders. Her skin was as pale as a cloud, a complete contrast to the tribe's darker tones. She was clad in clothes the Tamirians had never seen: A blazing red coat customized with small pockets all over it, earthy boots that would've protected her feet in any kind of stormy weather, and a tomboy-ish hat with a majestic blue feather to top things off.

The Tamirians did not know what to expect from this mysterious woman. The tribe had never received visitors before, and the maiden seemed... adventurous, to say the least. She claimed she was a pirate, searching the world for all it had to offer. "I have seen many things, from bustling cities to tranquil forests," she explained, "but now, I wish to live among the Tamir tribe, people who truly survive with what the Earth offers to them."

Despite her claims, the Tamirians were still not yet convinced. What was she truly hiding behind her unnatural look? Did the foreigner plan to wipe out the tribe? Or did she want to capture them and force them to join the unusual lands she came from?

As if sensing their suspicion, the maiden plucked the beautiful blue feather from atop her hat and offered it to them. "My peace offering to you," she said. "It comes from a rare bird whose feathers stare at you with 1,000 eyes. I am sure you will find it valuable."

And the Tamirians did indeed find it valuable. From all their lives on the island, not one bird had feathers this shade of deep ocean blue. Wansawk, the tribe leader at the time, accepted the maiden's offer to live with them.

But he was completely oblivious to what was to come.

The maiden quickly became accustomed to the Tamir tribe's ways, excited to live a life full of nature. She picked berries with gatherers, caught fish with fishermen, and assisted them with their troubles. However, the longer the maiden stayed with them, the more destruction there was in her wake. The berries she picked poisoned those who ate them, leaving them bedridden for days. When she fished with others, danger in the form of a shark or drowning would arrive, killing innocent Tamirians. And let's not get started on how many stillborns she would help birth.

Wansawk and his council had agreed - The maiden was to be removed from this Earth, never to return and cause more pain to the Tamir tribe.

Equipping their battle-ready soldiers with spears and weapons, the Tamirians had but one goal: Hunt the maiden and rid her from this land. By the time they were fully prepared, they split up and searched the island, for she was not with the tribe at the time. Perhaps she was on her own exploration through the land's exotic jungle or on a swim through the ocean's tropical waters. Where she was, they would find her and remove her curse once and for all.

After hours and hours of searching, the warriors had finally found their prey. She stood on the edge of the island's highest peak, cool winds drifting through her fiery curls as she overlooked the tribe. Although nightfall would arrive soon, the Tamirian warriors had trapped the maiden. She was all alone on the mountaintop with no one to witness her death but the warriors.

It was time to rid the maiden for good.

However, as the Tamirians crept closer and closer, eyes locked on the woman before them, the maiden swiftly turned behind her, the warriors right before her. With their brightly colored face paint and hands tightened around their weapons, the maiden automatically realized the truth: They were going to kill her.

"Look at you!" She blurted, gesturing toward the wild warriors. "All of you! I bring you no harm, I give you my most prized possession to you, I try to *make* myself one of *you*, and this is what I deserve? I deserve to *die* at the hands of the very people who *accepted* me as one of their own?"

Although the Tamirians could feel the emotion and desperation in her voice, they did *not* back down. They had one mission: Kill the witch that had hurt so much of their kind. They would *not* empathize with the poison harming their once-healthy lives.

Raising their weapons, the warriors yelled into the night as they charged right toward the maiden. They seemed unstoppable; It was as if they were ravenous wolves cornering a trembling bunny. Their blood-thirsty urges surged through their bodies, tribal instincts going haywire. The Tamirians would finally slay the maiden, and all would be reverted to normal.

Or so they thought.

“May my dragon have mercy on your souls,” the maiden murmured to herself. She closed her eyes and felt the chilly breeze of the mountaintop. For her, there was no sound but the wind. No trampling footsteps rushing toward her. No yells or war cries bursting her eardrums. There was nothing but the maiden at the peak of the mountain.

And then she fell.

The Tamirians could not stop the maiden, but became confused instead. As the warriors slowed down to a halt, ideas began to form in their minds. Didn’t she know she was a coward for causing her own death? Even the smallest of tribe children knew it was better to face your problems than push them away. What good did it do the maiden for killing herself?

But for the maiden, her revenge had only just begun,

From where she fell rose a monstrous beast, nothing the Tamir tribe had seen before. Crimson scales spread all throughout its body, golden flecks shining in the moonlight. Large, leathery wings stuck out from its sides, its membranes flapping gusts of wind to keep it midair. It

was equipped with razor sharp claws and fangs, and its eyes, blood-red with deep scorn, burned with payback.

“You listen, and you listen good,” the dragon growled, its tone deep and threatening. “If you Tamirians want to keep on living, then you better listen to what I want. Every thirty days, sacrifice a maiden on this very peak. If not, I will *not* be afraid to scorch every one of you pesky Tamirians and eradicate your tribe to useless smithereens. *Got it?*”

The warriors, now cowering at the beast’s sheer intimidation, all nodded. They were terrified, to say the very least. They trembled at the thought of a creature as monstrous as that one obliterating the tribe. Flames would ravage the forest, blood would be splayed everywhere, and the dragon would rule, proudly knowing the Tamirians were extinct.

Surely one maiden at the sacrifice of the Tamir tribe would be worth it.

“Good,” the dragon answered, a growl still resting in its voice. It perched on the peak and narrowed its reptilian eyes. “Now scam, you good-for-nothing natives!”

It let out a booming roar at the Tamirian warriors, causing them to flee. They ignored the piercing gaze of the beast as they scrambled down the mountain. They tripped and fell, but now they had a new objective: Follow the dragon’s orders. Every person in the Tamir tribe needed to know that. It was either give in to the terrifying creature, or perish because they disobeyed.

News went around quickly. How the warriors found the maiden atop the mountain, how they encountered an unimaginable beast, and the order it had given them. From that fateful day on, the Tamirians had obeyed the dragon and sacrificed one maiden to it every thirty days. First, it was Farrow, a precious teenage girl. Next, it was Nitsume, a woman who wished to be a mother.

Ever since that point on, we have given one maiden to the dragon atop the peak. We have not missed a single thirty-day interval, lest the dragon's threats finally come to life. This is the unfortunate curse we have given ourselves - The ultimate consequence of our actions. And thus, this concludes the Tamir tribe's tale of the maiden and the dragon.