

Nymph's of Etheria

Faye Valentine

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The story so far...

After the death of her grams, Celeste inherits a house, a small fortune, some fanciful costumes and the contents of a safety deposit box. Following her grandmother's wishes, she waited until arriving at her new home to open the intricately carved box she removed from the bank. Inside, she found an ancient tome and a letter from her grandmother telling her the truth of Etheria – a fantastical world and center of every story she heard as a child.

After dressing in her favorite costume and securing a small pouch of coins to her belt, Celeste donned the ring contained in a compartment of the ancient tome and, after reciting the incantation, found herself travelling to another dimension...another world. When she came to her senses she realized she was on Etheria and the ring she had been bequeathed was talking to her, granting her a small bit of power.

With her knowledge of Etheria in hand, Celeste set out to find the Tower of Argus in the Ebon Weald – the one location her grandmother said she could find help. But with no idea where exactly she was, she had no choice but to follow the river until she found something recognizable.

After spending a month being trained as a sex slave by a group of men known as the Gatherers, she put on an awesome display of magical might that sent the slavers running and the walls of the Calbourne Stronghold crumbling around them. Having saved a young Nymph named Halia from certain death, she gathered what supplies they could and set out for the Ebon Weald.

Celeste and Halia became fast friends and faster lovers and during their weeklong trip across the Sagyrst Plains, they passed the time by playing with the many toys Celeste made with her magic. And when they reached the Audience Chamber in the Tower of Argus, Celeste was greeted by someone who should not be.

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“How is this possible?” Celeste said with complete shock. “Y-You’re dead!” she said staring at her Grams. The woman sitting on the throne of Argus was many years younger than her grandmother, but she knew that face anywhere.

“Yes and no,” her grandmother replied. “Please, come in and be at ease. No harm will come to you here. Who is your nymph companion?”

“I am Halia of the Sanguine Grove, Majesty,” Halia answered.

“Majesty?” Celeste said with raised brow.

“I am Queen of the Ebon Weald,” her grandmother replied. “Now, I’m sure you have a million questions for me.”

“Yeah, like how in the hell are you alive? We buried you less than two months ago!”

“Please leave me and Celeste alone. And show Halia to quarters,” Queen Lidia said to the guards standing on either side of her throne.

“Yes, Majesty.”

“It’s alright,” Celeste said after seeing the troubled look in her lover’s eyes. “Halia and I are salhane. What you can say to me you can say to her as well.”

“Congratulations on finding love. Very well, guards, you may leave us be.” Once the guards had left the chamber and the doors sealed shut, she continued. “It’s really good to see you again Celeste. I knew you could not resist the temptation of wearing my old ring for long.”

“I put it on the day I got it,” Celeste said in reply. “However, it was not exactly an easy journey to get here.”

“May I assume it has something to do with why the two of you are dressed as slaves?”

“You may.” Celeste pulled back the side of her widely split skirt and showed her grandmother the fancy ‘G’ branded there by the Gatherers. “I was taken my second night here and spent a month at the Calbourne Stronghold being...trained,” she continued. “Halia and several other women as well.”

“BY THE GODDESSES!” her grandmother gasped in terror. “Are you alright? How did you escape them?”

“The more important question is how you are here? You’re dead, Grams!”

“Yes and no. While my earthly self has indeed died, I was given a choice. I could either go into the ground where I would eventually become worm food, or I could return here and live again. As you can see, I chose the latter.”

“But you died at the age of ninety-three! How are you so young?”

“You wear a magical ring upon your finger that transports you between dimensions and you question how I’m younger? The Goddesses, in their infinite kindness have bestowed youth upon me so that I may live a long and happy life.”

“I’m sorry to speak out of turn, but what is going on here?” Halia asked.

“The ring my granddaughter...your salhane, wears upon her finger is Aravae, the fifth Sister and like me she is not of this world. We have been brought here by the will of the Elder Goddesses to give aid however we can.”

“By the Goddesses!” Halia exclaimed. “Why didn’t you tell me before?”

“I did not know if I was allowed. I’m sorry Halia.”

“Don’t be! Being bestowed one of the Seven Sisters is an honor beyond compare and bodes well for all of Etheria. I am honored to have met you, and even more so that you have accepted me as your salhane.”

“Speaking of which, we are both with child!” Celeste blurted out. “How is that even possible? For Halia, yes, she is of this world, but I am not. How is it even remotely feasible for them to impregnate me?”

“This is a fantastical world,” Grams answered. “Cross-breeding takes place here all the time so I suppose we are close enough to their version of human that breeding is possible. I am so sorry that you had to endure such... indignities, Celeste. This world has so much good to offer, however, it does have its darker elements just as earth. Your job as bearer of the Fifth Sister is to aid in whatever way possible given the abilities bestowed upon you. Speaking of which...”

“I was granted some minor incantations and the ability to commune with plants and animals. Aravae said I was like the Druids of the Ebon Weald. So, you’re Queen of the Ebon Weald, how did that happen?”

“I’ve given myself to the betterment of this world for more years than you would believe and for that, for helping save the Nymphs and the Druids, I was made their queen.”

“Queen Lidia’s name is known far and wide,” said Halia. “Not only is she a fair and just Queen, but her actions run counter to those of Emperor Elion which garners her even more of a loyal following. You know, since Queen Lidia is your grandmother, this makes you a princess.”

“What? Really?”

“I suppose it does,” Queen Lidia smiled. “I think celebrations are in order for the new princess!”

“I’d rather no one knew of our relationship just yet,” Celeste said to everyone’s surprise. “Don’t get me wrong, it’s every girl’s dream come true to be a princess, but wouldn’t it pose unnecessary risks? I mean, aren’t princesses captured and held for ransom and all that? Besides, and no offense to you Grams, but I’d rather forge a name for myself than ride on the coattail of your deeds.”

“No offense taken. I couldn’t be prouder of you Celeste. I knew gifting you Aravae was a wise decision. Already you’ve saved the lives of many women, but I fear that was only the beginning of your trials and conquests. There are many evils plaguing this world and the Gatherers are only one. It is your duty to bring justice wherever you go, but such a life is not an easy one. There will be many hardships along the way, but as long as you’ve got loyal friends to rely on you’ll make it through even the darkest days.”

“I’ll never leave my salhane’s side,” Halia proclaimed.

“So, when is the big day?”

“We head to the waters of life next,” Halia replied. “You are invited, of course.”

“I will be there for the joining. And congratulations.”

“You’re not upset I’m with another woman?” Celeste asked nervously.

“Of course not. I’m not that closed-minded. Besides, I’ve had my fair share of female lovers,” Grams replied with a knowing smile. “That being said, know that this world too has its bigots and there are many that see such unions as unnatural. Outside of the Ebon Weald it is best if you keep your love for each other a secret.”

“The Queen speaks true,” Halia added.

“There is one more thing you must know before the joining. Did you tell her of the transformation?”

“No, Majesty. I did not tell her because I did not know she was from another world.”