

AMAZONIAN

Origin Story



The fire whispered upward, devouring dry wood and casting a weak glow against an ocean of black. In the circle of stones, it pushed back the cold that had settled over the forest like a silent predator. Sparks drifted into the night, alone in a world where even the sky seemed watchful.

Another branch dropped into the flames, and for a moment the clearing grew brighter. In that glow, the young woman's bronze face and dark, unyielding eyes emerged from the shadows. She sat opposite her captive, her leather armor dyed deep forest green, a quiver hanging from her shoulder. The fire revealed only fragments of her, yet those fragments spoke of danger.

Across from her, the prisoner sat motionless hands bound, armor blood-stained, his pale skin an undeniable sign that he did not belong to these woods. Fear had drained the color from his face as he stared into the flames, unable to guess what fate awaited him.

Then the world split open. A blinding flash tore across the heavens, turning the forest into stark daylight. The woman snapped her gaze upward and waited for thunder.

None came.

Only a strange sound like a million beating insect wings filled the air. The crackling grew louder, then another storm of lightning flickered across the heavens. She rose instantly, bow in hand. Whatever was happening, it was not natural. If the sky had ever belonged to the gods, then surely this was their war. Electric streaks tangled across the night, lighting the world in unnatural brilliance. She watched, enthralled, until bolts began striking the trees. Turning sharply, she finally saw the harrowing truth a wall of darkness advancing, devouring trees, soil, and air alike. It moved with the lightning, an expanding void swallowing the world behind her.

The prisoner saw the terror form on her face and turned as well. She whispered one word that held every memory, every attachment:

"My home..."

The man ran after her only when she did her voice leaving no room for hesitation. Through the dense forest she sprinted like a jaguar, dodging branches and uneven ground with instinct and training. Behind her, she heard the crash of armor and a cry of pain the prisoner had fallen. She did not spare a single glance.

At last she burst from the treeline, overlooking the riverside village. The unnatural lights in the sky made the world as bright as day. Even from a distance she could see the panic spreading voices of prayer and screams mingling with the constant insect-like buzzing.

What they did not yet realize was that the same impossible darkness was consuming the forest behind them.

She inhaled deeply.

"May the gods protect us," she whispered.

Just as she prepared to run again, the buzzing stopped.

Silence.

She turned back.

There was nothing.

No trees.

No sound.

No world.



The fire cracked again, climbing skyward as if nothing had changed.

"I do not know where we are. I do not know where we are going, nor what waits for us there. I only know... these lands are not our home."

Twenty sunrises had passed since the night the world ended. The darkness had become deeper. No moon ever rose. The stars overhead seemed strange, unfamiliar, too close as though the heavens had shifted.

She now sat by another fire. But instead of a prisoner, four young huntresses faced her. In the past they may have slain rabbits, snakes, perhaps the occasional predator but nothing more. Now, they were scouting the unknown, searching for a new place the village could migrate to.

The river had nearly dried within ten days. Most of the animals had vanished. New jagged mountains had risen where none had been before, and beyond them only dead grasses, scattered trees, and pale barren earth. There was no sign of water.

"When dawn comes, we move. Leave the sun behind and move fast. Stay close to one another."

The young warriors swallowed, sensing the weight in her voice. Their village had lost no one not yet. But their world was gone, and survival no longer meant hunting it meant stepping into a land none of them understood. The men stayed behind to dismantle homes; the women ventured into the unknown to scout. Had they been in their own forest, none of the girls would have feared. But tonight, even they could detect unease in the eyes of the seasoned warrior before them.

"Your arrows are limited. Use them wisely. You are hunters do not become the..."

She cut herself off, tilting her head. Footsteps. Something or someone approached from the dark. Heavy breathing. Two-legged.

She vanished into the shadows in an instant, arrow nocked, bow drawn. The huntresses followed her lead, blades out, tense but uncertain. The figure stumbled into the firelight. It was the prisoner. Half dead, clothes torn, body bleeding from fresh wounds. The clearing fell painfully silent as everyone watched him struggle for breath.

"Fire..." he gasped before collapsing to his knees.

She slowly lowered her bow and returned the arrow to her quiver. The huntresses relaxed not an enemy, merely a slave.

"Fire... Agura," he managed, struggling to speak.

Normally such disrespect would be punished. But the last twenty days had stripped away many old rules. But after what they had endured, she needed to understand more than she needed to discipline.

She approached cautiously, eyes scanning the trees.

"What are you saying, slave? What happened?"

Unable to meet her gaze, he pointed past her into the distance a direction he did not dare look directly at. Then he repeated one of the few words he had learned in twenty days:

"Fire."

Agura stepped away from the camp and peered into the night. At first, she saw nothing. But once the campfire glow no longer blinded her, she spotted it a faint flicker of orange far away, high on a mountainside. Impossible, she thought. It could not be theirs.

She stared for a moment, breath tight. Then her eyes widened. She spun around and kicked sand into the fire with force.

"Put it out," Agura ordered sharply, her voice low but urgent.

The others followed, smothering the flames until darkness swallowed them once more.

Under the strange unblinking stars, all eyes fixed on that distant flicker an unfamiliar flame burning in a world that no longer followed rules.

By dawn, Agura knew she would have to choose:

Toward the light... or deeper into the darkness.

