

Taken at the Mammoth Hunt
A Prehistoric Erotic Romance

By Madison Barry

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I heard the shouts of victory long before the long column of hunters rounded the rock outcrop and came into view. The jubilant men shook bundles of spears over their heads, pounded sticks together, or simply leapt and tumbled, anything to express the joy of their success as they neared the camp. Most of the other women and older children ran to greet them, to relieve them of their weapons and to help carry the two who had been wounded. I stayed behind in the hide shelter, watching.

Mates reunited. Children jumped into their fathers' arms. Mothers reassured themselves their sons were safe and unharmed. I counted to myself as the final six appeared at the end of the line, carrying two long, curved tusks, three men to each heavy column of ivory. All forty-seven had returned.

Those who had not participated in the hunt gathered their supplies and set off immediately in the direction the hunters had come from. Two of the younger men turned around and ran ahead of them to lead the way to the site of the slaughter.

I stayed in the tent, waiting.

I would not join in butchering the mammoths. I would not help dry and preserve the meat, tan the hides, separate the sinew, or cut the ivory. I would not collect the precious fat stores, clean the intestines, or cook the livers for the hunters to eat tonight.

No, I huddled in the shelter, naked but for the reindeer furs I had wrapped myself in to escape the cold, obeying Father's order to stay out of sight.

When the initial confusion and celebration died down and everyone had set to their various tasks, I spotted Father approaching. I had held out some small hope that he would be trampled by a stampeding mammoth or fall from a high perch or suffer some other horrible fate, but he walked toward me easily and without pain. Not even injured. I sighed and shed the furs, knelt in the middle of the tent on a soft bearskin, and smoothed my face so he would not see my disappointment that he had returned. I had enjoyed the two-day reprieve.

He ducked into the tent and closed the flap, crouching under the low ceiling in his fur parka and warm leg wrappings. Did he not see how I shivered? Even in summer, it was cold near the glacier, but still he would not allow me clothing in private. He smiled. "My daughter. I have missed you these last two days. I wish you could have watched as we took down the beasts. I delivered the killing strike on a pregnant female. We will have her hide when the skinning is done. Would you like mammoth hide boots for the winter?"

"Yes, Father. Thank you," I said.

"You will have the warmest feet in the lodge come the first snows." He laced the flap closed for added privacy and joined me on the bearskin, shucking his parka and boots. His soft leather tunic had blood on it, and I saw now that his leg covers, too, were soiled from the hunt. I would be spending tomorrow at the stream scrubbing those, I had no doubt. Unless he still wouldn't allow me out of the tent. Why bring me along at all if he was that concerned about my being seen? I was only a burden if I could not be useful. "We will remain here for at least another seven days and nights while the meat dries. I trust you will continue to follow my instructions."

"Wouldn't it be better if I helped with the work? What purpose do I have, sitting here in the tent all day?"

His large hands engulfed mine, and he leaned forward to kiss my forehead. His shaggy, red beard tickled my nose. "I know you understand why you must stay hidden, my daughter. And you know your purpose."

"I am not your daughter," I grumbled. I rarely protested anymore when he called me that, and naming him "Father" came naturally after all these years, but sometimes when I was feeling

especially trapped or surly, I reminded him of my true status, despite the anger my audacity might provoke.

He did not take the bait this time. "I have cared for you through your maturing and becoming a woman. I have fed and sheltered you, clothed you and provided for you. You may not have been born to my mate, but you are my daughter."

I had to stop myself from reciting those words along with him, I had heard them so many times. "Will I ever take a mate, *Father*, or will you keep hold of me forever? I have seen nineteen summers!"

"Would you leave me alone in my old age, daughter?"

I lowered my eyes. "No. But I am lonely, Father. Why will you not permit me to meet the other women, work with them? They don't know who I am."

"It is too dangerous, daughter. How can I be certain you will not be recognized? Now, come, you are cold. Let me warm you." He removed his belt and lifted his tunic, gathered the furs I had been using while he was away, and spread them out in a pile in front of me. I bent over, resting on my forearms and lifting my hips.

He knelt behind me on the bearskin. "So obedient, daughter. Did you miss me, as well?"

No, I thought, but I nodded. It was easier to obey, let him finish quickly. At least then I could wrap myself in the furs again and eat something hot.

His hands on my hips were cold. The freezing air wafted through tiny gaps where the leather panels of the tent were stitched together. Tendrils of rapidly cooling air seeped in between the ground cloth and the tent walls, and the ground itself drew the heat from our bodies and our breath. The sky was darkening outside, and I smelled fires being stoked and food cooking. Someone lit a fire close enough to our tent that the comforting scent of wood ash and smoke pushed back some of the chill.

"We will feast on mammoth tonight, daughter. Do you remember the taste of fresh mammoth meat?" He traced my spine with one finger, reached under me to cup my breast, pinched the nipple hard enough that I whimpered.

"No, Father," I whispered. The last time I had had fresh mammoth meat was ten summers ago. The only thing I remembered from that great hunt was being wrested from my family and made this man's daughter. For years, he had not wanted to risk bringing me on these hunts, afraid my birth lodge would demand my return if they knew I still lived. But when he learned my parents and brother had been lost in a fire the winter before last, he had arranged for me to accompany him on last summer's bison hunt. That had been a successful trial, and he had started dragging me along every time, even though I was of no use on communal expeditions, since he would not allow me to set foot outside the shelter if anyone from my birth lodge was present.

He kneaded my other breast, then tangled his fingers in my hair. "Then it will be like the first time again."

The innuendo was not lost on me. I heard him spit into his hand, felt his hard member intrude between my buttocks, and exhaled as he entered my anus. It was no longer painful after countless penetrations, but neither was it pleasurable. I had heard the moans and shouts of coupling between mates, and I had no doubt that the women enjoyed the experience as much as the men, but Father had never granted me such favors. He had only ever used this hole, the *wrong* hole, because he dared not risk conceiving a baby. After all, everyone would know it was he who had impregnated me, and as much as they tolerated his other treatment of me, they would not approve of a father doing *that* with his daughter.

“Oh, my daughter, I have missed you,” he groaned as he buried himself inside me. I closed my eyes and braced myself as he thrust, withdrawing almost all the way, then driving forward, his thighs slapping against mine, fingers digging into my hips. When he was finished, he stretched out on the bearskin and held me against his body, pulling more furs over both of us. I welcomed the warmth, though I wished it came from some other source. After a few minutes, he stirred and extricated himself from the furs. “Stay here and be warm. I’ll bring you something to eat.” He fixed his tunic and tied his belt around his waist, put his parka back on, and his boots, and ducked out of the tent.

I made a nest of the furs and curled up inside them. With the sunset, the temperature outside had dropped even further. When we journeyed south, back to the lodges, it would warm considerably, to the summer heat we craved after the long winters, but here, even in summer, water left out at night would be iced over by morning.

The tent flap fluttered, and I thought it was Father returning with food for us, but a younger man, close to my age, peered in. I sat up, clutching the furs around myself, and stared. He looked vaguely familiar, though I was certain he was not from our lodge or any of the two neighboring ones we spent the most time with.

“Are you alone in here?” he asked.

“Yes. For now. My father is getting our meal.” I wasn’t supposed to talk to people, or even be seen if possible, but he was right here in the tent. What could I do?

“I saw him go. I thought I recognized him. His hair color is unusual, and his face ...” The man came all the way into the tent and let the flap fall closed behind him. “And you, now that I’m looking at you—I was still young, proud of a few fine hairs on my chin, but—” He fingered his full beard, a dark brown like the bearskin I was sitting on. “Have you always been his daughter?”

“Always?” I stalled, unsure of how to answer.

The man squinted at me, deep brown eyes scrutinizing my face. “There was a girl from my lodge, with hair the color of the grass near the end of summer and eyes as blue as the glacier, who vanished from a mammoth hunt, ten summers past. She was the daughter of the leader’s sister. When I saw you as we traveled north, though you kept your face hidden under your hood, I thought—is it possible? Maybe the girl did not die, as the leader’s sister believed. Maybe she was taken. Her father was certain she lived.”

“My mother and father were killed in a fire two winters ago,” I said slowly. “I have lived with the man I call Father since a mammoth hunt in my ninth summer.”

The man nodded. “It is you. We were friends. We used to fish together in the stream. You always caught bigger fish than I ever could. Your hands were so steady, and you were so patient. But my aim was better with a spear. Do you remember when you accidentally struck a squirrel when you were trying to prove you could hit a leaf with your spear?” The smile that showed through his beard was wistful and kind, and his eyes glowed with amusement.

I had spent these years with Father trying to forget my life before, my mother and father, the other children I’d roamed with. But some memories were never erased. “I remember. I cried. But you skinned it and said we should eat it and use the fur for gloves.” How could I not have recognized him as soon as I saw him? “Dagon,” I whispered.

“Yes. Hani, my lodge—*our* lodge will be elated to hear that you are alive and well.”

“No, Dagon, you can’t. You can’t say anything. If Father sees you here ... you have to go now. Please. Forget that you saw me.” The last time I had almost been discovered, Father’s

punishment had been so severe I was afraid to leave our hearth in the lodge for nearly two full cycles of the moon. If he learned of this ... I didn't want to contemplate what he might do.

"But, Hani, we have mourned you for so many seasons, and with your family lost to us so recently, your return would be that much more joyful. Please!" He reached for my hand, and the furs fell away from my chest. My breath caught as he gazed at my naked breasts, nipples contracting in the sudden cold. "But you must be freezing!" he said, when he found his voice.

I shrugged back into the furs. "I'm warm enough." For some reason, I regretted covering myself again, despite the cold.

"Come with me to our camp. Come now. Please. If you want to stay with the man you call father, no one will try to make you leave him, but at least let them see you."

"I can't, Dagon. I can't leave my tent." How I wished to tell him everything, let him take me away. But Father would never just let me go. "I can't leave Father."

Dagon's eyes filled with sorrow, but before he could utter one last plea, the tent flap was flung open, and Father halted in the entrance, a bone platter heaped with meat and root vegetables in one hand. The aroma made my mouth water, even as panic paralyzed me.

He fixed a murderous glare on Dagon. "Out of my tent!" he roared.

Dagon froze. "I mean Hani no harm," he said. Oh, how he misunderstood Father's rage! "I am overjoyed to learn that she's alive. Thank you for caring for her."

"Out!" Father shouted again, coming inside and moving close enough to Dagon to be threatening. The tiny tent was very crowded with three people in it.

Dagon was not stupid. "Yes. Of course. I will go. Please consider what I said, Hani," he added before making his escape.

Father listened as Dagon's running footsteps faded and then threw the platter of food at me. Hot food and grease splattered me, and I flung my arms up automatically, exposing more skin to the attack. The food had cooled outside and I wasn't burned, but the fat was still hot enough to be painful as it dotted my arms and chest. The platter itself bounced off my shoulder, and I was sure it would leave a bruise. Father's anger ran deep, for him to waste food like this!

"Who was that?" he asked, his voice frighteningly quiet.

"I don't know," I lied.

"He knew your *name*, daughter. He knows *you*. Who is he?"

I cowered, bits of meat and vegetables clinging to my hair and collecting in my lap. "A friend from—from before," I mumbled.

"He will run straight back to his camp and proclaim that he's found their lost Hani, and what will I do then, daughter? They believed you were dead. It was safer that way. Now they'll come for you, take you from me. I won't let you go easily, daughter. This is why you were not to speak with anyone or leave the tent!"

"He came in. He talked to me. I didn't invite him. He knew who I was before I said anything. You must believe me, Father!" I shrieked. "You must!"

"Our lodge will rally to protect you from them, daughter. And they will try to take you. Do you really want a blood feud on your head? To see your precious 'friend' injured or killed in his quest to kidnap you from your rightful home?"

"No," I gasped. "No! But they wouldn't—they wouldn't—" Would they? Dagon had said I didn't have to leave Father, but what if his leader thought otherwise? I was his sister's daughter. I would have value to him. I might be an heir or ward with my mother and father dead. "I will stay with you, Father! Please don't hurt Dagon." The name slipped from my lips before I could call it back.

“You have disobeyed me, daughter, and put both of us in danger. First, you will eat all of your food. You will pick it out of your hair and lick it from the furs. I will not see it go to waste. And then you will be punished.”

He picked up the platter and piled some of the vegetables and a hunk of meat on it for himself and set to eating. With tears streaming down my cheeks, I began to eat my share, scrap by scrap. I didn’t taste a single bite.

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