

Tigris
By Kayla



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Once long ago, in the time of Ancient Greek, there lived a young girl named Tigris. She was preferably twelve years old, with black hair and ice-blue eyes. Unlike most people, she believed that women could do anything men could do. But, to her dismay, nobody believed her, except for her father.

She aimed her bow and arrow at the doe in front of her. *Okay, wait until it's eating the grass, distracted,* she thought. So she waited a moment for it to start nibbling on the grass. When it did, she fired. The arrow shot through the air towards the doe and finally reached it. Within seconds, the doe was dead.

“Thank you for your meat, my friend, it will feed my family, and I am grateful,” she whispered into the doe’s ear. Tigris sighed her relief, if her father found she hadn’t brought back supper, she’d be toast before she could say “oh great”. Gathering up all her strength, she dragged her catch back to the small cottage in which her family lingered.

“Papa, I’m back,” she called through the wooden door. Her father opened the door wide and smiled as soon as he saw her dead doe. Tigris’ father was a tall, strong man with dark green eyes and black hair like Tigris, with a strong sense of humor.

“Tiger, how did you manage to catch such a large thing?” he asked her.

“Papa, I told you, it’s Tigris, not Tiger. And who says a girl can’t catch food for her family?”

“Well, you’re always going to be *my* Tiger,” said he. “Your mother is going to be very angry with you, you know.”

“Yeah, yeah, well Mama can go eat the hens if she thinks I’m going to stop,” Tigris declared.

“Speaking of the hens, you didn’t feed them today yet! Now get going!” Tigris nodded her response and passed her father into the tiny living room. She found her mother feeding new, dry logs into the fire. Her mother was a skinny woman with light brown hair and ice-blue eyes like Tigris, one who thought women were made for doing chores instead of actually *useful* things.

“Hey, Mama, I’m back,” Tigris greeted her mother.

“Hello, Tigris, have you-” Tigris’ mother stopped mid-sentence when she looked up and saw the doe Tigris was carrying. “Oh, you’ve been *hunting* again,” she said the word as if it were the most disgusting idea in Greece.

“Yes, Mama, I have. Is there a problem with feeding my family?”

“Only because ladies are *supposed* to be doing lady-like things, not hanging around shooting lousy arrows at animals that are too stupid to even know what’s going on!”

“Mother, I think you offended the doe,” Tigris joked, patting the dead animal.

“Tigris! Just get that... *Thing* out of here!” Her mother scolded. *Geez, fine! I’m going, I’m going!* she thought. She took the doe into the kitchen and placed it carefully on the countertop. Then she exited the kitchen and walked into her room, a very small space with a not-the-comfiest-bed-in-the-entire-world tucked into one corner, a nightstand next to it, and a small closet door on the opposite wall, where her tiny closet awaited her behind it. She tossed her bow onto the nightstand and hopped onto her bed. *Why does Mama have to always go against women hunting, doing, as she might say, men things? A woman do anything a man can do, can’t she?* Tigris shrugged off the horrible feeling creeping up on her. What if *everyone* doubted what women were capable of? Would the history of women be remembered any longer? *No, don’t go thinking like that! If you do, it’ll be you eating the hens!*

“I guess I’ll have to change Mama’s mind, then,” she murmured to herself. She went downstairs and as she did so, realized *How in the name of Rome am I going to do it?* She stopped mid-step. *She’s going to have to see that women doing things is just like men doing things. Just how am I going to?*

“Maybe take her out hunting with me once, and teach her how to hunt,” she decided, realizing at once it wouldn’t work.

She'd never accept, let alone allow it. She thought and thought and thought.

"This wasn't as easy as I thought," Tigris admitted. She decided to go feed the hens before somebody realized she hadn't.

On her way out back, she heard Mama and Papa talking to one another in the kitchen. She pressed her ear against the door to hear what they were saying.

"-Simply *can't* go!" her mother was saying.

"Dear, I have no choice! James said he needed men to go! If I don't go, they'll lose! Everyone else agreed to go, and there's no one else!" her father told Mama. "If I had a choice, I'd stay! And besides, we need the money!"

"Money? This is all for the *money*?" Mama cried. "All I need now is you!" *Wait, what? Where is Papa going? And who is James?*

Her mother continued, "I'm going to miss you. Are you sure you *have* to go? You could always stay if you change your mind."

"I would if I could, dear."

"Wait, what about Tigris?"

"Tigris will have to fend for herself without me. She'll be fine, she's a tough girl for her age." *For her age???* Okay, that's

offensive! I'm getting outta here! Without further ado, she turned away from the door and went out back to feed the hens.

Later at supper, her mother cooked the doe Tigris had caught earlier. Tigris didn't talk to her parents, or make any conversation with them.

"Tigris," her mother said gently. "Did you feed the hens?"

"Yes, Mama, I did," Tigris answered quietly. She looked up at her father, half expecting him to make a joke out of it as usual, but he didn't say anything. She moved her gaze onto her mother instead. Just as she looked, she could have sworn her mother was trying to tell her father something across the table, something she wasn't supposed to know about... Tigris' mother was almost nodding her head toward Tigris, a sure sign of a sort of signal. *What's she doing?* She glanced at her father, hoping to be told what was going on, and she caught her father looking at her. He looked away, probably hoping not to be caught, but he was indeed caught.

"Okay," he confessed after a second, finally looking at her. "We know, we're caught."

"Papa, what's it about? Where are you going?" she let her eavesdropping secret slip.

"How do you know?" her father demanded.

"I might or might not have, er, eavesdropped..." she explained, well, almost explained.

“You eavesdropped?” her father sighed. “How much did you hear?”

“Just enough to know you’re keeping secrets from me!”

“And how much is that?”

“I’ll take it from here!” a voice said loudly. Tigris turned toward the voice. It was her mother’s.

“Tigris, we... Your father... Has to go.”

“I know that, but, where? Why?” Her mother took a deep breath.

“To war.”

“What?” Tigris stood from her chair. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“We knew you’d make this huge deal out of it. We wanted to tell you, we just... Didn’t know how,” her mother said. “We didn’t want you to worry.”

“Well, who is James, then? Answer me that!”

“James is a friend who works at the war, dear. He is in charge of the people who go out into the battle. There just isn’t enough men, James needed all the men he could get. I have decided to go,” her father explained.

“Go? So, you’re going to give your life to try and win a war that cannot be won in the first place? Papa, you can’t go!” Her father shook his head.

“I’m afraid I have no choice, Tigris.”

“No choice?! You can stay!”

“No, I can’t.” Tigris’ father got up from the table and went away into the darkness of the hall.

“Mama, you’re just going to let him go?” Tigris asked anxiously.

“Yes, dear, there’s nothing we can do. He’s made his decision.” Then her mother walked down the hall, too. Suddenly Tigris was all alone at the supper table. She walked after her parents, turning into her own room. She closed the door behind her and jumped on her bed. She buried her face in her pillow and cried. *So this is it. He’s really leaving.* The thoughts only made her cry harder and harder.

In the morning, she climbed off her bed and sat on the floor thinking hard how she was going to apologize about last night. *Would I just say, well, Bye? No, maybe it should be like Bye. That’s the exact same thing!* Tigris groaned. This was one of the first times she had to actually think of something like this. Then, an idea came to her. *What if I don’t have to say goodbye? What if I go with him?* She gasped at the thought of therefore proving that women could do anything men could do. She decided to pack.

This is it, no more doubts of women’s abilities! She couldn’t wait to start fighting those... Wait, who was she fighting? Uh oh. Trapped. How was she going to prepare if she

didn't know what she was up against? *I'll just have to make do*, she decided. She continued packing and, when she finished, hid her bag behind her nightstand to get out later. She took her bow off her nightstand and studied it for unwanted flaws. She discovered none and decided to practice for the upcoming battle. She took her bow, went off into the forest, and made some straw dummies with long sticks as swords. When five dummies had been made, she picked up her bow and hid herself in the thick trees. She pretended that the dummies had followed her through the battle and had picked their fight with her. She got an arrow, the sharpest of the ten, aimed it at the nearest, and... *Fire!* Her arrow exploded across to the dummy, tree after tree. Just as the arrow was only seconds away, Tigris shut her eyes. Even if it wasn't real, it pained her to see anything die. She heard the straw *crack* as the arrow hit it. Tigris opened her eyes and saw that if that truly was a real enemy, the others would definitely be hesitant to attack her next. Before the others had any time to run, – if they were even alive – she fired another arrow, and then another, then another. Arrow after arrow, Tigris' confidence grew more and more. She would rule this war!

On her way back to the cottage, Tigris stopped to hunt. She caught an elk, quite a fair catch to feed her family. Her father would be quite pleased to see she had caught all this. She walked back to the cottage and set her catch on the table. Then she decided to go back and find her father, she might find out when or where he was going. She left the dead elk on the

table and went back into the forest. She heard some people talking a few trees away, so she stopped to listen. She walked toward where the voices were coming from.

“Yes, I have decided to come.” It was her father’s voice.

“Good, I was hoping you would. What did your family think of it?” This voice was new to Tigris. *Maybe it’s James*, she thought.

“They didn’t like it, especially Tigris. She hated the idea.”

“What can you expect? Ladies would always say stuff like that.” There was no response from her father. *At least he didn’t agree with James*, she thought. Footsteps sounded in front of Tigris, and she retreated into the cottage. She ran down the hallway and into her room just before her father opened the front door. He must have heard her door close, because he called “Tigris?” *Busted!* She opened her door and called back, “Yes?”

“Tigris, I know you’ve been listening to James and I talking,” her father said. “How much did you hear?”

“Nothing much, just James asking what Mama and I said about it.”

“Why did you stop to listen?”

“I... I wanted to know... When you’d be going,” Tigris lied.

“Well, if it’s that important, I’ll leave tomorrow.” Tigris nodded, glad she had a clue when she’d leave secretly with Papa. “Do you know where your mother is?”

“I think she’s feeding the hens,” Tigris explained. Her father gave a stiff nod and walked out the back door. Tigris gave a sigh of relief her father hadn’t caught her lying. She walked back into her room and took her bag out from behind her nightstand. She dug inside of it, in search of the apple (probably not very appetizing after the hot day inside the bag) she had stuffed in there this morning. She dug through her safety kit and extra arrows for the upcoming battle, but she still could not find it. Finally, she found it in the bottom of the bag. She took it out, placed it on the nightstand, and aimed her bow at it. She took several steps back, and fired her arrow. The arrow flew through the apple’s core, seeds flying everywhere. The apple split in half, and the arrow had gone straight through the apple. It had made a dent in her wall, the arrow hanging there, as if clinging to life. Tigris lowered her bow. At least one thing was clear: That enemy out there sure was going to be hesitant to attack *her*.

