

Hope for a New World

Chapter 2

February 17, 2133

The hotel restaurant seemed to be only seating customers in one section. Nearly half the tables were occupied, with several people sitting at the counter. Maddy was able to locate Tam and Ke'ala easily as they were wearing beautiful, brightly colored blouses that lit up the room. Tam was the first to greet her, getting up, offering a hand and a welcoming smile.

Maddy eagerly reached out her hand and returned the smile, "You ladies are bringing wonderful color to a cold winter morning."

Tam pulled out a chair, to offer Maddy a seat. "Please join us we have a pot of coffee, can I pour you a cup?"

"Thank you, I didn't get much sleep so it would not only be appreciated, but necessary."

Ke'ala reached for the pot, turned over an empty mug and began to pour. "I don't think any of us got much sleep. Me mostly because Tam spent the night scolding and threatening me to behave this morning. She refused to stop nagging me till I capitulated. So I will do my best to obey."

Tam laughed, "You know she doesn't even hear that the explanation of how she's going to be respectful is in fact her being disrespectful. So, I'm hoping you'll meet us halfway here."

Maddy stirred sugar into her coffee more to delay the conversation than to dissolve the sweetener. "I think it's best if I go first here, and you can decide how you want to proceed after that."

Tam and Ke'ala leaned into the table giving Maddy the floor.

"I know Gaia is key, but bringing her into this with the vicious nasty way our opposition is running their fight, puts her and her believers at risk in a way I'm not comfortable with. I have an obligation to her, and by extension to you that I've felt in my heart for as long as I can remember. But the further this

goes on and the worse things get, an internal battle is growing in me that's literally making me sick. Then you show up and suddenly feeling sick turns into feeling like my head's going to explode. So there, that's it, now you go."

Several minutes passed before anyone spoke. Ke'ala broke the silence, her voice was subdued, almost caring. "I understand now. She said you knew her. But I thought that was kind of a generalization, you know, like you knew *about* her. But you really do know her."

Maddy exhaled in that painful way you do when you hit the water hard in a belly flop. Her hands clasping the mug were visibly shaking, her eyes focused on nothing, trying to come to terms with what she just heard. "She speaks to you?"

Tam pulled her chair close to Maddy and put her arm around the young woman, whispering softly in her ear. "Take your time, take it in, we're all here for you."

Her muscles relaxed a bit. Ke'ala reached over, refilling her coffee. Maddy sipped slowly letting the warm liquid soothe the tension in her throat before she found her voice. "You actually speak to her. Tell me, what does it sound like, her voice? I always imagined it was melodic like a song, soft, soothing, rhythmic. When did you first hear her? Can you talk to her any time you want? What do you talk about?"

Ke'ala's demeanor changed so completely she appeared a different woman. Her face took on the brightness of her blouse and her eyes sparkled. "Melodic is a perfect description, everyone says something similar, but each of us hear her a little differently."

"Each of us?" Maddy pulled away from Tam, and finally noticed everyone in the restaurant was watching them. As she took in their faces, she felt a sense of recognition, overwhelming intense familiarity, provoking another desperate gasp for air.

As the group tried to make their way to Maddison, Tam leapt up, shielding her from the approach of the well-meaning mob. "I know you've been waiting a long time for this, and you've nothing but good intentions. It may, however, be best to go slowly here and do this a few at a time. Sit back down, order some food and we'll get to each of you in turn.

Now Jimmi, get us some hearty piles of rations --- nourishment first, earth shattering revelations second.”

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Forcing down a forkful of hash browns, Maddy was ready to engage again and started with an easy question. “Tell me, why do you call her Jimmi?”

Tam smiled, “You'll learn quickly that there are very few situations in which this woman cannot find a personal connection, a little-known fact or a song that relates everything back to Jimi Hendrix. There are a lot of things you need to know about us, and we have serious matters to discuss. What say we take care of the introductions quickly and find a more private place we can talk.”

Ke’ala didn’t hesitate taking the lead. “I think you should meet Panuk and Uki first. They’re Inuit from Whitehorse Canada, bush pilots both. It’s those two in the booth by the window. Next, just behind them, are Royal and Perri they live in Solvang, California. He’s Air Force and she’s a large animal vet.

“Sophia and Daniel, over on that side, are from Carmarthen, Wales. She’s a doctor, internist, and he’s in construction.

“Nikau and Jedda are the two at the end of the counter. They met here, the youngest in the group. They’re kind of a volatile pair. He’s from New Zealand, a fisherman and surfer, and she’s from Australia, a waitress and survival instructor. In so many ways they’re alike and in others polar opposites. Zico and Idal are a hoot. They’re from Brazil, Amazon sustainability researchers, bigger than life and happy about it.

“Joha is Saami. He’s here from Russia with his wife Isa but she’s not feeling well so he’s struggling a bit. Zyhna and Emory are Hopi. She’s intense and makes me nervous. She’s in communication at a level that is beyond us all.”

Maddy literally fell back in her chair. “There are so many of them --- I never imagined.”

Tam looked at Jimmi, “I told you.”

“What does that mean?”

“Jimmi wanted to introduce you to them all. There are 46 more here at the conference, and many don’t speak English. I figured it would be easier to take in a smaller number that you could talk to and ask questions. I just want her to acknowledge I was right again.”

“The shocks just keep coming. Well let's get started.”

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As Zyhna and her grandson Emory made their way out of the restaurant, Maddy poured herself another cup of coffee. “That was intense, and she said so little.”

Ke’ala reached for the coffee, “That’s what makes it so unnerving.”

As the trio attempted to debrief the experience, a young man approached the table, standing close enough to engage them, but obviously wanting to keep his distance.

Jimmi assumed a protective stance, “Can I help you?”

The nervous looking man made it apparent he was loath to get too close. “I hope so. My name is Bram Leask. My wife, daughter and I have traveled a long way. I’m still not sure why, all I know is she keeps telling me we have to talk to Maddy. Are you her?”

His accent had a Scottish bent that seemed to fit with his mop of red hair. He was a young man, well suited to the outdoors, with a ruddy complexion, and hands that were used to hard work. Worry and distrust were visible in his face.

Standing up with her hand outstretched Maddison approached him, “I’m Maddy, how can I help you?”

The man pointed to the woman and child standing outside, “My daughter says she has information she can only give to you. We’ve a small Croft on Shetland Island, we’ve come a long way, a trip we could ill

afford. At first I refused to come, but then my daughter got fever and my cows went dry. I can't explain. All I know is, we were made to come, and you must meet my daughter."

Tam was already escorting the pair inside. The woman, Fia, was fair skinned, with short dark curly hair, and she clearly shared her husband's trepidation. The daughter, on the other hand, was joyfully taking in all the sights, greeting people she passed along the way, she had a gorgeous smile and long strawberry blonde hair.

Bram kept a protective hand on his daughter as she rushed to hug Maddy. "My name is Greer and I'm eight years old. I knew who you were the second I saw you." Looking to Tam and Jimmi, "I know you both too --- she said you'd be here."

The trio shared surprised and knowing looks with each other. Maddy sat in a chair, took Greer's hands in hers, looked her in the eye and asked, "Who is this she?"

Greer giggled, "Why Adelphi, silly, Gaia's sister."