

58BCE

I am Helena, a scholar at the Great Library in Alexandria. Rows upon rows of scrolls from all over the Mediterranean - heaven, if you are like me. Having a whole library to aid me in my studies is a dream unlike any other, and I feel blessed to have it come true. Not many women are given such an opportunity, but I am thankful I have. It is a great honour to be allowed to work here day after day. Studying Maths and Physics, and unveiling secrets that the Gods have chosen not to give away. I feel that Athena would approve of the pursuit of knowledge.

57BCE

A new scholar entered the Library today, and I found him scanning the shelves dutifully. Twisted into an expression of determination, his face seemed to resemble the statues of Greek Gods that are scattered all over Alexandria. Dark hair cascaded down to his shoulders, framing his face. He picked another scroll off a shelf, skimming through it with his blue eyes narrowed. He seemed to be a very interesting character, I thought. I would talk to him tomorrow, and compare notes on our studies.

56BCE

I watched the scholar take a place at a table and read a scroll thoughtfully. At times, he scribbled down some notes on a sheet of papyrus, looking pensive.

"Hello." I said, sitting opposite him, placing down a handful of scrolls filled with calculations I was interested in.

"Hi." he said, looking up finally from his work. His face was even prettier when he looked at me with his full attention. "What do you study? I saw you around here yesterday." He grinned at me.

I smiled back, glad he was prepared to engage in conversation with me properly. "Physics. Currently, I'm working on studying some of Archimedes' work." I said, showing him one of the scrolls with a diagram detailing Archimedes' lever.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. His face seemed to light up at the mention of Archimedes. "His work is very fascinating. I've looked at his work before, but not in such a great library. So much to learn. Maybe you could take me through some of his work later?" He suggested, an eyebrow raised.

"Of course." Inside, my heart danced with joy. A man, respecting my field of work! Unheard of. Even my Father sometimes frowned when I talked to him about my studies. One day, I hoped, this respect would be the case everywhere you turn, and not with the occasional man.

"Atticus. A pleasure to meet you."

"Helena."

*Atticus*, I wondered. A name referring to the Goddess Athena and her namesake city: Athens. Wit, learning, and wisdom - all in one name.

52BCE

By now, I was comfortable with Atticus. In fact, Atticus had come to be my confidante, my best friend, and my partner in research. Together, we had solved countless equations, big questions, and *so much more*. I could not imagine how life could have been without the fateful day Atticus walked into the Library for the first time, hopeful and full of curiosity.

He was a greater man than I could hope for. He sat next to me everyday, his usual smile on his face, clutching his usual collection of scrolls containing numerous equations. I had come to learn of all his little quirks and abnormalities; like when he furrowed his eyebrows in concentration, or the face he made when he was excited at a new piece of evidence we hadn't previously seen.

I was blessed. Whether it be by Aphrodite, or simply by coincidence; I was glad I had someone like Atticus in my life.

48BCE

There were rumours of tragedy flitting around Greece, making my stomach turn and twist in my body. Julius Caesar was on the rise, and the only refuge I had was the Library, and Atticus. I travelled through Greece, racing to the Library. But people were screaming, crying, and yelling. The whole scene made me feel sick to my stomach. My refuge, I realised, was no more.

In the background of all the wild panic was the Library, but not as I had known it. The new Library of Alexandria had been swallowed by unforgiving flames. Someone had done this. A despicable act, ridding the world of volumes of endless reams of knowledge and discovery. It was a crime against humanity, a war against the world, and most of all? A strike in my heart. Where would I study? Where would I run away from this confusing world, too full of treachery and hatred? Where would I find peace? Where would I be with Atticus, the only person that had ever shown pride in knowing me, and warmth when seeing me?

My head was spinning with emotion and hatred. Where was Atticus? Surely he was around somewhere, tearful and destroyed, just as I was.

But then, I saw him. A smirk was plastered on his face, walking out of the burning building, replacing his usual radiant smile. His eyes set on me, and his smirk fell and revealed panic instead.

"Helena." He said, staring at me.

I don't know exactly what emotions I had been showing on my face. Anger? Disbelief? The only emotion I felt was betrayal. That was the word for it. The mix of emotions bubbling up in my stomach, threatening to push me over the edge and into a void. A bottomless void, where the

two things I had truly loved in my life were gone. Atticus, gone. My safe haven, gone. Neither Aphrodite nor coincidence were blessing me anymore.

"Why?" I asked, dreading what would come next.

"I..." he faltered, voice cracking. "I had to. I had to do it, you must understand. They made me do it - they made me do it. That's why I came here in the first place, to find out what I could about this Library."

I began to walk away.

"Helena! I had to do it! I met you, and everything changed, but they made me do it." He caught up to me, and grabbed my wrist. "You are my truest friend, Helena."

I couldn't believe the words I was hearing.

"I am no friend of yours."

I walked away from the Library of Alexandria for the final time.