

# Dye for Me

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I am the little match girl. I show them my wares. They are good matches.

White on top. Light wood beneath. I stain them with indigo flowers. I gather them at the river. I press their wildness from them. I make the matches more than they were. Years of this offering have colored my hands. In my dry bed, I find my fingertips in the deep blue of the sea. In the early morning, my palms speak purple night.

If I could buy a horse, I would deliver messages. More valuable than matches. When I count the money, when I ask folk about their tellings, the wolf howls. She drowns out the world. I place bread crusts and chicken bones at her feet. She snarls and tugs at the end of my dress. Pulling me deeper into the forest.

The woodcutter does not follow. He stays by his glittering ax. The people of the village look through me. A trick of the light.

The wolf leads me down a winding path. I've been here before. There are no souls here. The clearing reveals a stone altar overflowing with worn things. I run my hand along strung shells, tarnished rings, faded papers. I even find dolls.

The people of my land abandoned my parents and brother to hunger and cold. They left me all alone.

Until my wolf came. She taught me the hunt. I carefully coated my matches in the deadly indigo flowers.

I patiently dispensed them over the years. Killing the guilty. They never suspect someone so low to them to be death's agent. I hide my justice. I soak my hands in a mixture of berries and red cabbage. My wolf nuzzles against me and curls up at my feet. I heed her call.

