

《The Forest Spirit who sought the Gods》

12 En route

"Ooooooh. Faster than I thought you'd be. And bigger than a shrimp. Did you learn a bit of respect during these last few centuries, Nyx?"

"Couldn't you just stay asleep, you overgrown lizard." A displeased melodious voice answered the raspy one, coming from the front of the dragon's "iceberg". He could recognise her from the voice, but she didn't get on the magic-made island with him.

"Come on don't be like that, I wanted to see you quickly, I'm on an errand."

"While sleeping? And since when was someone above you anyway? Aren't you just bored?"

"..." The dragon raised an eyebrow. "At least you've learned to talk. But you didn't know I have Ole' Elements watching through me now."

"YOU WHAT!"

The dragon heard a loud splash, and Nyx finally came into view. Her appearance was that of a three meters long mermaid with silver scales and teal hair. Her eyes were dark black, the contrast between them and her pale skin dragging one's focus into her pupils. Her face was at the limit of mortal perfection, full rosy lips, a cute button nose and well-proportioned features framed by her back-length wavy hair.

However the dragon wasn't impressed and snorted. "Heh. Silver shrimp. How much did you change her? Is she even conscious anymore?"

"She chose to give me free reign, basically swapping our usual positions. And not much change actually! She's a princess down here, I liked her colors! I only arranged her silhouette and tail a bit, her face was so good to start with!" Her shock was forgotten with just one comment on her looks. The Goddess of the Arts loved beauty the most after all. "And look at all the trinkets they managed to create for me! The craftsmanship is excellent!" She proceeded to twirl around a bit, showing off the jewelry and clothing she was wearing. A short-sleeved, form-fitting vest made of her own silver scales covered her voluptuous chest, exposing her belly. Intricate golden

bracelets were on her arms, jingling with her movements, carved pearl earrings were at her ears and navel, and a diadem made of nacre embedded with emeralds framed her forehead.

"A bit gaudy, but maybe I'll take some on my way back. I enjoy gold works."

"Way ba- YOU MADE ME FORGET AGAIN!" She huffed violently for a bit, calming down her rising anger and making sense of what he said at the start. "So. An errand, eh? And how could I help you, oh lazy-boasting-lizard?"

"Which way to the Primal? I want to find the little Oak the God of Elements told me about."

"Wait, didn't he pass away almost three weeks ago? And you also forgot the way from the Third to the Primal? How long did you sleep this time to forget even that?"

This one jabbed at a sore spot. "...Just answer me please. I don't want to keep flying in circles and the old one won't tell me."

"Alright crybaby, but you'll have to either help or pay me before that. Which will it be?"

"What if I told you the Tree's both dead and alive? Aren't you interested?"

Nyx dropped her mocking tone, becoming solemn at his remark. "Nidhögran* the dragon, Child of Elements. You may be strong, but it does not give you right to joke about the power of the Three. I sincerely hope you are telling the truth."

"Why else would I be willing to go on an errand for? Don't make light of me. I'm very curious about the life the little Oak created in his last moments, and so is Ole' Elements."

"...I'll bite, since you're even prouder than me." Her interest wasn't really stoked, but seeing the aloof overgrown lizard bend was worth more than any riches. She hid her mouth behind a graceful hand, giggling. "And by the way, the Primal is in the opposite direction. Congratulations on flying here and losing so much time." Nidhögran's eyes twitched.

--

The fourth day of travel towards Ebb went well. Thani and Oakbud were beginning to leave a trail of tree-houses behind them along the lake shore. Growing bored of her dried food, Thani decided to catch fish. Armed with a simple dagger and her magic, she dove into the lake. The water was clear, and she could see satisfying prey with

little effort.

Using her short weapon, she stabbed. Right into her left arm. She extended her wounded member, and got ready for action. The spreading blood attracted a predatory fish as big as herself, with menacing teeth and a thick build. "Slow but strong, this is going to be fun!" She was getting excited at her first fight in years, even if her adversary was only a fish.

It rushed at her in a straight line, trying to get a good bite off the frail creature facing it. Thani went with the flow, letting it bite her arm used as a bait. She used it arm as a pivot to grab onto the fish's dorsal fin, and focused all her strength to jab her dagger into the fish's eyes and gills repeatedly.

As she got dragged under by the frenzied creature, her air reserves grew insufficient and her vision began to blur, her head hurting more and more. She started using magic to actively fuel her body's regeneration, forcing it to heal at a tremendous rate and function as the lack of oxygen tried to paralyze her, continuing to stab, cut and dice the predator.

In the end, Oakbud, who was idling around her bag and clothes watched with curiosity as Thani pulled a gigantic fish out of the water, her knife still planted in its gills. "Now I can eat until we arrive! Too bad you can't help me eat all of it.". Her injuries had already finished healing, her skin sporting no new scars. She arranged a few rocks to make a fire pit, and lit a bonfire with some deadwood to grill her catch.

When night fell, Oakbud followed new orders and grew giant leaves on a nearby tree, that his companion used to wrap some fish meat for later transport, and returned to his spot on her head. The strongest fishbones were used to build a lantern, fueled with fish grease and protected by a piece of its skin. "And here is light for tonight's treehouse. I'm counting on you, Bud!".

The growing tree of the day picked up the brand new lantern from Thani's hands with a branch, stationing it close to the treehouse's top. She climbed to the little room and laid her mat down. "Alright, that's it for today! Goodnight Oakbud!"

She drifted to sleep under the dim lantern's light, while the sleepless Oakbud watched the lake's waves form and crash against the beach.