

《The Forest Spirit who sought the Gods》

15 Wild night 3

Oakbud watched in wonder as Thani, Jamie and Frond were facing off and talking. Gramor was on the ground, pinned down by the heavy armor he was unable to lift under Oberon's curse. Why did they stop? They were all at each other's throat seconds ago.

The camp was in complete disorder under the moonlight. The tree was brought down, a messy jungle of vines held a broken corpse, two other bodies were piled and leaked blood on each other at it's edge. A bit further on the opposite side of the dead campfire, Thani stood covered in blood and sweat with her dress torn on her stomach. Around her were the corpses of Lucas, Felicity and Delia. They had all received cruel and painful deaths, painting the earth black with blood on the gray-scaled background.

He didn't understand. Why did they hurt each other? Why... did he?

He understood that Kali's blessing didn't only let him communicate easily. After he possessed Dravin, he could think even more clearly and construct better sentences, getting more and more familiar with the language. But that wasn't all. He could put words on the strange feelings he had when watching the fight before. Fear. Worry. Anger. Confidence. Gratefulness.

"Thani want help? Is the fight over?" Oakbud's thoughts were passed to her.

She answered aloud, surprising the two strong men who couldn't hear anything Oakbud said before. "It's fine Oakbud! We're just confirming each other's intentions, they want to run and I want to fight!"

"Me want to help! I feel they have strong power!"

"I'll be alright I tell you! Just look! Learn from me, see that everyone isn't as good as you've seen. Not even me."

Jamie and Frond were unsettled. First Dravin had turned traitor and their backline trio

had exchanged their lives, leaving none standing. Then this crazy woman managed to kill three of them in barely a dozen seconds before they could help, downing Gramor in the process. Now she was talking to air, even calling a name ; what was she up to this time? Their eyes met, and that was enough for them to decide it was time to end this farce. Tonight they had lost everything, and only had vengeance left. Not the exuberant, messy, angry kind. The calm, cold, calculating kind that would only leave dust after they were done.

"Look at them Bud! Look at us! Look how they just changed! They're not scared anymore! They are ready to lose everything they have left, even leaving the living one on the ground to himself! We are selfish! We are monsters!"

Both apostles took up their arms, ready to fight. Their metal-reinforced armor was ideal for both defense and movement, and Thani would have no way to leave a decisive blow without receiving one herself. This was two versus one, but they were strong. The sheer difference in physical strength was enough to bridge the number of Blessings. Both parties knew, this would become an endurance fight. They would aim to land a crippling blow while protecting themselves, restraining her before finishing her off. She would aim for light trades, taking injuries and healing them as they came, whittling them down as time went on.

"We know you can feel our emotions. We will not hear another treacherous word from you." And they made the first move.

As she dodged another heavy slash, Thani couldn't help but start taunting the two strong men facing her, even though her words were much different from her appearance. "Come on! Those heavy swords look as light as dried-up sticks in your hands, but you can't even hit me right after all this time?" Her dress had gained a few more cuts, and was now plastered to her body with all the blood splashes.

Jamie and Frond hadn't slowed much since the start of the fight, their stamina seemingly infinite. Thani's magic, however, wasn't. She limited herself to her passive regeneration and blood animation, using it to harden her sword-wielding arm tattoo in the form of a crystallized blood bracer and the other in the shape of a multi-threaded spiderweb whip.

From the very first move, Thani had been on the defensive this time. They were perfectly calm and worked flawlessly together, covering each other for any gap in defense. Their mental fortitude was also strong, preventing them from being tricked by anything she could say. She was close to a checkmate situation, the only salvation being the open ground letting her kite them around again and again.

But she didn't care at all! She was finally free after fourteen years staying in her temple! Any hardship was worth it, and any activity was welcome, death matches included. The fish-hunt was exciting, but she had never felt so alive before the current fight. Nine versus two, counting six versus one for her, and winning still. She was a blood-soaked fairy, a dancer bringing death under the moonlight. She was discovering the flip side of Kali's worship, the opposite of accepting and soothing the suffering.

They were running, pursuing the source of clear and insane laughter under the night. They were restraining themselves at first, not giving their all to the fight in fear of Theomars' punishment were they to lose themselves in it. But even though her body was weak, she was agile and capable of powerful magic. They had rarely fought on such a fine edge, advancing and turning both meaning death. Their limits were challenged, again and again this very night, bringing them higher and higher.

Oakbud could feel it. All three of them would die if the situation stayed like this. No side gaining an advantage, the slightest slip would start a fatal exchange of lives. Magic was thrumming through the air, pulled around them like a crowd of cheering speculators. What should he do? She did not want help from him... But what about help from others? And the duo of Jamie and Frond... Should he help them too? Changing the situation, tipping the scales...

He could feel both Theomars and Kali in the magic, he could feel the three believers approaching their limits. He had decided. He would call out to Them, and let Them decide this fight. Even if it was impossible he would try. His resolve made on this grand bet, he could feel two additional traces of divine powers, but didn't know whose they were.

Slowly, but powerfully, Oakbud lifted his arms in the air, looking at the stars, and added to the magic maelstrom that was forming around the camp. What would They do? The one who helped him, and the one now facing him?

His mind was pulled away. He could see his own, feel their rage, their calm, their emotion, their control. What happened here? Why could he see out of his Child? The fight was electrifying, a textbook example of "brave warriors". As he looked more, he found them limited by their blessing. He is the Theomars the Warrior God, and he could feel Kali by his side. They gave him a fight, and he would give them the tools for more.

She felt herself be transported again, and recognised the magic of the little forest Spirit. He called her to look over her believer during this fight. She was already strong, but she hadn't reached the full understanding of what she had been given yet. Years wasting away in vain, praying. She is Kali, the Goddess of Suffering and she could feel Theomars by her side. Their overflowing emotions, opposing bliss and grief, she embraced them all. She would help resolve the knot in those people's hearts.

Thrilling. A creature possessing divine might, choosing to surrender fate to others. It could lose so much, and win so little. But he did anyway. Whatever the stakes, the bold decision triggered her interest. She is Eludia the Goddess of Luck, and she could feel Monte by her side. She grasped Fate, holding it and making sure this grand bet would unfold without interference.

Fascinating. Through sheer will and magic, it managed to pull the consciousness of four Gods at the same time. Making his way through the world, one step at a time, decisive and steady. The three fighters were also impressive, pushing forward, never faltering, determined to be the ones left standing. He is Monte the God of Fortune, and he could feel Eludia by his side. He would bolster their will and magic this time, so that the world may bend to them in their endeavour.