

# 《The Forest Spirit who sought the Gods》

## 17 Dawn

The vortex of magic dispersed when the last hit was given to Gramor. Theomars and Kali wouldn't let things end unless they were thoroughly finished. Oakbud could finally see through the wall of wind and dust, and spotted Thani splayed on the ground, unconscious. She was in no danger of dying thanks to her incredible self-healing capabilities, but her current state really was unsightly. Covered in blood, clothes ripped, and snoring the pain away ungracefully with a silly grin on her face.

The rest of the camp was even messier than before. Oakbud possessed the body of Frond, the strongest of the bandits, and regrouped the bodies towards the fire. He left the corpse, and turned all nine of them into plants, offering them their last home. All around the soil had been scraped clean by the vortex, leaving an almost smooth circle around 50m in diameter at the edge of the lake.

He finally went back to the fallen tree, grew vines from the stump to grab Thani and hide her away, waiting for her to wake up, and finally used the dying lantern to spark a new fire. He stood upon his little plant mound / throne proudly, surveilling the surroundings closely for what was left of the night.

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"My scars are gone..." When she woke up, Thani knew it even before looking at herself. All she had accumulated during her fourteen years of prayer was lost, and would not come back. It wasn't important anymore, though. The battle before taught her she was headed down the wrong way in her worship, and Kali herself opened up her eyes to the truth. It was liberating.

Staying still under the foliage cocoon, she checked the state of her body. She was overall healed, only her thigh would still prevent her from walking. Her magic wasn't recovered yet either, and so she couldn't accelerate her healing. "Hey Oakbud, open up!"

Hearing Thani awake, the Spirit used a bit of magic to unfold the plants around her, letting the aura of dawn illuminate her. "That was too dangerous. Thani almost dead! Next time me help from the start!"

"Says the one who pulled Gods into this. Don't try to say otherwise, I felt it clearly. You managed to get at least Theomars and Kali's attention, an at least a third one, because these two wouldn't lock the vortex like that or heal us. My bet is on Deva

because of the healing." She was looking at the sky smiling, waiting for the first rays of the sun to brighten the next day.

"That was one hell of a night, eh? Can you bring me some food? I promise I won't be as reckless the next time, I know it was close. -Ow Ow OW OW! I mean it! stop that!" Oakbud was poking at her injured leg and looking at her with a reproachful glare, making sure his meaning was conveyed properly.

"You no die anymore. You heal, you eat, you wash, get new dress, then we walk again! Meet Dad-Tree friends, say goodbye."

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"HMMMMMM... that was a nice nap. Sleeping back in one's own nest really is the best. Hey, Ole Elements, I'm in a good mood, what do you want me to eat today I know you can taste it." The dragon yawned and stretched like a cat, the tip of his tail trembling and curling up. Looking at his "bed", he crushed a few rocks between his talons to make himself more comfortable before rolling back into a dark brown scaly ball.

"Nidhögran, Nidhögran, Nidhögran... I have known you for about a millenia now, but I have yet to find someone more capricious and forgetful than you. But I like that untameable side of you."

He stopped kneading the stone floor, one leg frozen in its movement. "Wait, a compliment? That's no good coming from you. What have you found to torment me this time? WAITNODONTTELLME!" His paw was now tapping on the gravelly surface beneath him, his claws beating an unsteady rythm following his train of thoughts. "...Ugh, you know it's your fault I forget so many things. I'm no God, you are! Being attuned to seven elements at once all the time disperses my focus too much, they're all so contradictory."

"Then just stop it and get moving. It's been a week already."

"Fine, fine! I'll cut back for a bit and isolate Earth to get steadier. But it gets me so sluggish, I want to sleep again just thinking about it!"

As Nidhögran finished speaking with his rumbling voice, his body shriveled a bit, his wings retracting into his back. His mane lost its fiery luster and turned ash-gray, and his breath lost its destructive power. Only his sun-like eyes kept their bright color, as even his scales turned a shade darker towards black.

What was left was a pitch-black and bulky Earthen dragon around half the size of the

previous Nidhögran, with two straight horns stemming from the back of his head. His limbs were shorter a stumpy, but the physical strenght he could exert was unparalleled. He exuded a dangerous rather than scary air around him, with his sharp and sturdy claws, impenetrable scales and his razor-sharp teeth filled angular maw.

"Aaaaaaaah... thiiiiiiiiis mouuuuuuntaiiiiiiiiiin reeaaaaalllllyyyyyy feeeeelllssss goooooood... Sleeeeepppppyyyyyyy."

"... That appearence of yours really doesn't match your character. Why did I make a bastard like you my Child again?" His eyes ware glazed over, and he seemed barely awake, like he would turn into a part of the mountain himself any second, never to wake up again.

"Beeecaaauuuuuuse I'mmmmmmm wiiiiiiiiiiiiild. Aaaaaaaaannnnnd I reeeeeemmmmmmeeeeeemmmmbeeeeer noooooow... Theeeee treeeeeeee aaaaand Nyyyyyyyx, sheeeee gooooooot meeeee gooooo thiiiiiiiiis tiiime. Leeeeeeeet's goooooooo aaaaaaffteeeeeer naaaaaap tiiiiiiime."

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