

《The Forest Spirit who sought the Gods》

21 Advice from a God

Unknown to the world, save for two creatures, a God had manifested directly through his child. Even the other people in the temple didn't know, as only those in the tree's clearing could know. The Gods and their Children were revered, but the God himself and the idea their followers had of them would always differ in some places. After all, what information got through the Child wasn't exact itself, because some things wouldn't be understandable to them, thus giving them an incomplete picture. To the Gods, choosing a Child was like a human feeding chicks by throwing handful of seeds, and selecting one to hand-feed on the side, speaking to it for entertainment or out of boredom while watching the others grow. In the end, a God taking over his Child to act was rarer than one would think, Nyx being an exuberant exception. Through the coincidence of meeting Oakbud, people would get to meet more Gods in days than the whole continent had in centuries.

"So you see, if you want to meet Us all it would be harder than you think. However I can maybe give you a few tips if you really want to look for them, be it information on their character or about magic. You have so much of it, it would be a waste not to learn."

Even though his own part was over, Nature couldn't help but doting on Oakbud more in memory of the God-Tree. Thani stood silent at the side, taking in as much as she could from this impossible encounter.

"If I go and say goodbye, will the others be happy?"

"Yes. Every one of Us has met the Stalwart Oak before, and receiving his homage would be touching."

"Then I want to go! Meet dad-tree's friends, say goodbye."

"Up until now, you have cast magic you have learnt from little Oak, but did it without really thinking, right? Have you thought on how you could make it stronger or direct it better?" The God started his lecture through this question, and it was directed at Thani too. Oakbud hadn't ever thought about that, so she was the one to answer first in the end.

"Pour more magic into the spell?"

"It is indeed a way if a bit crude and limited. Let me demonstrate for you."

Under the focused eyes of Thani and the little Spirit, Talia waved her hand, and four blades of grass grew side by side, with a few differences between them. The first looked banal, the second was shorter, the third was thicker, and the fourth was taller. Since they knew that casting multiple spells at once was bordering the impossible, and that the God was trying to teach them, they concluded it was the same one. However the flux of magic had to be different somehow.

"Now, try to cut them one by one, beginning with the one on my left. It is the most normal grass you can find. Tell me what you find."

Thani grabbed the first grass, and it broke with a slight pull of her fingers. It was indeed perfectly normal. She then went to touch the second, and was surprised that it didn't break ; when she pulled on it this time, the whole grass was pulled out, and she had to use both her hands to break it in the end. Frowning, she tried the third one. It was the thickest, but it broke just like the first, only needing a slightly harder force. The last grass didn't break when she tried to pull it up, and didn't break like the second when she bent it ; however it was cut easily by Oakbud's little arm. They spoke softly before coming back to Nature with their results.

Thani was the one to report back with her enchanting voice. "The second grass was harder and heavier, like multiple blades of it were stuck together. The third one was simply thicker, and the last one was very durable. But how? It was the same magic, wasn't it?" Both were awaiting the answer with fervent curiosity. Getting private magic lessons from a God was definitely not an everyday occurrence.

"Well said. The third grass corresponded to your first guess, pouring more magic into the spell. As you can see, the effect is the same but on a bigger scale."

Taking the broken second grass in hand, Talia began to make little holes in the ground as she continued speaking. "Imagine the dots are the magic I used for the first grass." There were five little aligned holes, evenly spaced.

"Now this was the second grass." Nature poked five holes again, except this time the space between them was almost non-existent.

"Third grass." Using the first spacing, eight deeper holes were dug.

"And the last one." This time the five holes were shallower but formed little lines, which were overlapping at their respective ends.

"Now do you see? You can change the result just by changing the use of your magic, and can even combine techniques. That's how you can arrive at this." Waving his hand again, this time a vine grew out of the earth, as long and thick as an arm, with a hard and rugged surface. Manipulating the flow, Nature curled the tip of it and stopped, creating a makeshift staff. He grabbed it and poked holes in the ground again. There were three rows of five deep dots, interlinked by little grooves.

"This is how the disciples of Elements manage to create their crystals. It is easier for them because they focus on only one element to compress, but it is applicable to many things, so take your time trying it later."

Nature really had an affable and uncaring personality. He wasn't interested in curtsies and pleasantries, but was happy to reciprocate sentiments. The extensive magic lesson ended up taking quite a bit of time with Thani and Oakbud's questions, and he only changed subject during the afternoon.

"I should stop with the magic, else you will both become Gods without any effort by the end of our discussion. Let me speak about Time and Elements instead ; I can't say much about the eight little ones."

Thani crumpled down, exhausted from the sheer quantity of information she received. Sadly, her regeneration didn't cover things like fatigue and headaches. If Oakbud hadn't made the Gods intervene in her fight a few days prior, gaining direct knowledge from Kali in the process, she wouldn't have been able to understand much of what Nature talked about today. This was the fundamentals of magic in the world! The basis for the existence of Gods! Too tired to think anymore, she fell asleep in the clearing.

"I'm impressed the little one could follow the discussion until now. She will get stronger and stronger. But now I can speak of my Brothers in peace."

Talia picked Oakbud up and put him on her head, before closing her eyes to start reminiscing.

"I know you like it up here.

Time... His Child loathes him, because he toys with him. He doesn't care much about anything, and only moves when something happens to catch his eye. If my guess is right, his Child will try to kill you to get back at Time, so you'd better prepare yourself and avoid him for now. He must have awakened like me when the Stalwart Oak died, his Child probably realized it too, and he is surely coming for you as we speak. The powers of time are versatile, so depending on how he uses them he might come right

now or never catch you for all I know. The magic of Time does not use magic but life itself, which is very dangerous ; you should try to learn more about it before continuing your journey. If you happen to meet him still, Time will surely take over to speak to you since you are interesting, but after that there is no guarantee for your safety.

Elements has a better character but a bad temper. He's passionate about things, especially his own creations, but he doesn't like to show it. I don't know what you can expect from him, but you're not in danger. His current Child is... I'll leave that for you to experience. All you need to know is that he's probably looking for you too.

And now, little Oakbud, I bid you farewell. I wish you well, and know that I will be watching."

After Nature gave control of her own body back to Talia, she helped Oakbud create his first golem, and attached the staff Nature created on it to mark it as protected. It had a human shape and was around 2.5 meters high, but was made of blocks of dirt and stone linked by plants. Its heavy steps shook the ground and threatened to throw its creator to the ground with the tremors.

Perched on the golems's head, the little spirit took some time to smoothen his control of his new servant. He had made the core himself with the crystallization technique and Talia's encouragements, before drawing materials from the ground around him to form the body. The humanoid shape was the final choice for multiple reasons, and mainly because it was the most commonly seen in the city.

In the end, Oakbud used his ride to princess carry Thani back to the inn at dusk, and since the golem didn't fit inside he left him out after pushing Thani through their room's window.

Looking for the other Gods wasn't as quick or easy as finding the rooted Talia, so taking a few days to learn more about them in Ebb couldn't hurt anyway.