

# 《The Forest Spirit who sought the Gods》

## 22 Daily life in Ebb 1

During the night, Oakbud had continued practicing his golem-making and its control by jumping back in the street and changing his first creation. When Thani woke up the next morning, she was greeted by the now usual "Thani fairy!" from Oakbud, eliciting a small smile. She was surprised at waking up back at the Inn, since Oakbud couldn't carry anything when she was with her ; Talia couldn't leave her tree too far either, and she didn't believe he would ask a stranger for help. Nothing was out of order in the room either.

Her head still felt muddy from everything she'd learned the day before, and stretched herself on the bed to finish clearing her head.

After a last yawn, she began her inquisition. "So, how'd I get back from the temple? Don't tell me the God somehow threw us here?"

"Dad-tree's friend tell me how to make golems! I make golem, then golem carry you back here. Thani fairy is big, so golem is really big too and not fit here."

"Wait, you've already managed to make that crystallized magic thing? You really are a freak. Don't tell that to elementalists, they'll spit blood from the shock you know."

She cleaned herself with a wet towel and changed her clothes before picking up their big loot bag. "Let's go get some breakfast, then sell off that stuff. You don't plan on screaming at me to go to the temple today, do you?"

"Golem carry us and bag, and we meet other Gods' followers! I am curious."

"Hey, your speech improved again. You're close to fluent now, just stop messing up some words in your sentences and you'll be good."

The strange couple discussed what to do with each type of items over a bowl of vegetable soup, bread and dried fish. This low-class inn's food was sub-par but so was Thani's purse ; she didn't have more than a few silvers when she left Pilgrim Woods, and the bandits didn't carry their loot on them. After the fight, she had picked up her weapons, and the less damaged armour parts. However since Oakbud had transmuted the bodies into plants, removing the armour proved tedious and dirty. They would go see a blacksmith for the weapons, a magic shop for the enchanted card deck, and a

jeweller for the ornaments they wore.

Reporting the encounter and get a bounty reward seemed like a good idea to Oakbud, but Thani refused to expose her strength in the open. To get the bounty, she'd have to show her open face and report her identity.

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The golem was walking with its heavy steps like the day before, except he'd shrunk to a height of two meters. It would still be unable to enter most buildings, but it wasn't as conspicuous as before at the very least. Its left arm was holding the clinky bag to its chest with its left arm, and carrying the sitting Thani in the other. Oakbud was in his usual spot, enjoying the smooth white hair under him. This strange way of transportation had two main advantages : first, people would make way for you, because bumping into a walking mud, rocks and vines wall definitely wasn't enjoyable. Second, it was less tiring, only needing to give the golem directions from time to time.

The bustling atmosphere of the commercial district was replaced with the unique sounds of the artisanal one. Hammers banging, bellows working, leather scraping, engravings, woodworking, magical research were loud enough to drown people's voices. As convened earlier, the golem's first stop would be a smithy to get rid of the heaviest load.

"Go to the 'Twin Hammers' smithy Bud', it's one of the biggest. I want to try something special and we're going to need an appraiser for that. And if I can really make what I'm thinking... eheh, you'll see." She was wearing a shit-eating grin and sparkly eyes, preparing to create a bit of chaos obviously lifting her mood significantly.

The building wasn't high, but had a high ceiling and a wide surface. The name was derived from their door : two enormous hammers were set to make an entry gate. The heads on the floor were made of steel, two meters wide, one long, and one and a half tall. Handles made from grossly cut then polished tree trunks went through the roof, standing proud with the chimneys behind them.

The golem was left outside, and when Thani and Oakbud entered a free smith-hand came to welcome them. He was pretty unremarkable in his work clothes, exposing his strong arms and sweat-covered face under a bandana.

"Welcome to the Twin Hammers, what can we make for you today? Weapons, armour, carving, infusing, we make it all as long as you have the coin!"

"Sorry, but I'm here to sell for now. Do you have an appraiser on hand right now?"

Otherwise I'll look in the next shop. I've got armour parts, some weapons, and some exotic stuff I don't want to discuss here."

The worker's sweat wasn't only from the heat now. What an beautiful and obnoxious client! All he learned was that she wanted an appraiser to sell scrap. The only redeeming point was the "exotic" item. Taking the bait, he brought Thani to a back area.

"Master Auri! I've got sellers with a need for appraisal! Are you free?" He stopped in front of the door and knocked at the same time, waiting for an answer.

"Come in!"

A strong baritone voice answered almost instantly, and the smith hand opened the door.

The room was an individual smithy coupled with an office. To the right stood a desk with piles of stacked documents and a few chairs around it, and a drawing table behind. To the left was the forge with a human-sized crucible, scattered molds, an anvil, a quenching basin, and an impressive collection of hammering and carving tools set on the wall. There was also a solid-looking safe, which was used to store the more precious resources of the shop.

The owner of the room was the forgemaster of the shop, an almost 2 meters-tall bronze skinned man. His flattened nose, bald head and sunken black eyes gave him a menacing air that was only reinforced by his bulging muscles. He signed the worker to go back to his own work before greeting Thani, seating at his desk and pushing a chair towards Thani.

"So what do you need appraised? That bag looks full of scrap, the others can handle that so you better have something interesting for me, or be ready to pay for my time."

Still wearing her satisfied grin, she answered without missing a beat. "I've seen debt collectors with a better temper than you, but I like the straightforwardness. I won't mince my words either, and don't worry about the bag of dead weight here. The good stuff isn't here..." She pointed at her chest "...but there".

"Are you the customer or am I? It's not the right time of the day for whoring you know. What do you want?" He had to admit she was beautiful and that her voice was enchanting, but recognising she was a follower of Kali, decided that throwing her out would be a bad idea. These people were usually eccentrics, and this woman was sure to be a special one among them.

Auri was frowning with a hand on his chin, not understanding what she was here for. He is a master-level smith, but she was here to sell. She said the bag was full of scrap,

so she had to own something else of value.

Thani dropped the bag and lifted her arms, picking Oakbud up on their way back down. "Alright old man, you win. I need two things, and they're linked. If the first fails I'll be out of here. Ever seen an elementalists make a crystal, and can you work them?"

"Yes, and yes. Engravings too. I'm a master smith, kid. I've seen whatever there is to see in smithing and magical materials. Stop wasting my time, you knew at least that much coming in here."

"Great, then you can help me for sure. Watch this and tell me if you can make something out of it."

She put Oakbud down, before lifting her left palm and grabbing her wrist with the other hand. Her smile was gone, replaced with an air of concentration.

Working her magic, blood began pooling in her palm. The principles she'd learned the day before gave her the idea of making blood crystals ; if elementalists could do it, why couldn't she with her own blood? It should be harder because it wasn't pure, but she was certain that her magical knowledge was second only to the God-Children now, and that it wouldn't be an obstacle.

Full of disbelief, Auri watched as the girl's blood took a ball shape, before shrinking, being covered in more blood and repeating the cycle. This was magic compression! Why would a believer of Kali waste years of time learning this? And making a blood crystal, what kind of idea was that! Thinking as fast as he could, he linked his own skills to the newly born material in front of him, and to what she'd said before. Two linked steps, the first being the condition. Materials creation, forging. It was obvious now.

"If you fail that, you can just go. I'll have seen something worth days of my time at least. And if you manage to create a stable crystal with your blood, I want it."

Thani was still concentrating, linking the motes of magical power of blood together, weaving the densest and hardest connexions she could. Magic infusion during the forging of a weapon and using crystals were a different level of quality altogether, even for custom orders by a master smith.

Reaching her limit, she grunted and closed her hand around the thumb-sized ball of blood she'd created. "Not selling. If you want it, make something for me with it."

"No way I'm using basic steel to fuse that, you pay the metals at least. Don't make me bankrupt, I've got to pull out some fancy stuff to make it worth."

Negotiating with a master smith to get some forging done with a bag of scrap equipment and a few scant silver coins was definitely a challenge for Thani. But she wouldn't give up, for she had felt her lack of good equipment strongly in the 1v6 situation before. "I need a dagger, sharpening and durability engravings, imbued with that crystal and my own magic power. And it's personal so I won't make another. I can give you other elemental crystals as payment though."

Auri was clenching his hands on his crossed arms, leaning back in his chair with a crooked and stiff smile. "You realise what you're asking for there? I'm going to need to use all my blessings to the max and a precious base here. I don't have earth-affiliated metal on hand, so next tier would be blessed creatures carcasses. Got some drake bones on hand to make it, and that's going to cost a pretty penny even if you don't count the fire crystals to melt them. I'll do it for three blood crystals though."

Understanding flashed past her brain. She asked for too much, and couldn't pay for it herself. But so what! Her trump card wasn't used yet!

"Hey Oakbud, can you make some fancy crystals too? I know you use earth because of your origin, but can you make some others?"

"Me can make earth crystals good, but didn't try others yet. Thani wants me to try now?"

"Yeah please, I really need a good custom weapon. Blow his mind!"

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Afternoon.

Auri, still not believing his potential loss, was working on the drake bones. That strange familiar could speak to the mind directly, and even managed to make another unknown crystal, as big as a fist! Thumb sized was more than enough for a craft, but with that he had enough to experiment on without using it all at once.

As a follower of Monte, taking risks wasn't the usual thing to do, but he could feel the possibilities through what he just witnessed. After being blessed three times with strength, magic and fate, he was rarely wrong about this kind of things.

Strength allowed him to hammer and shape the hardest materials, his magic let him perform crystal infusions and runes, and fate now guided his hand towards success. Thani would need to be present for the last part, magic infusion, but for now she was gone attending to other business.

While the bone was melted and mixed with other reagents, he was making a blueprint

of the runes he'd carve on the weapon to let the magic flow. Thani had revealed her blood animation to him, and explained she wanted to use her own blood as a medium to augment the weapon during fights. The design was interesting, complicated projects like this weren't everyday occurrences.

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While Auri was overworking his brain and counting his potential gain or loss, Thani and Oakbud went back to the general part of the smithy. She exchanged her bulk of scrap against a suit of light leather armour, and paid for a new and waterproofed cape.

Once that was done, they looked for another clothing store so Thani could replace her torn and blood-stained dresses, before heading to a shop named the "Blazing Ring". It was owned by a follower of Nyx named Saroo, a beautiful elf. He had almond-shaped green eyes, back-length silver hair, the characteristic pointy ears, and a slender and soft body. He looked like the slightest breeze would send him flying, in total opposition to the bronze mountain Auri. His blessing helped him see the value in things and also elongated his hands, which helped him appraise the quality of his jewelry works and items people would present him. With time, he acquired knowledge on magical reagents and ingredients, and his shop now served as both a jewelry and a magic shop.

Thani presented him the card deck used by the thief Lami, and was asked what made it special. Oakbud, having fought her directly, was the one to do the explaining.

"She followed Eludia, Me thinks. She used her blessing and turned the card, use fate to bring magic. Tower here made armor shine, scythe hurt herself and seer found me hiding. Not seen other cards before fight ended."

"Fascinating! This is definitely custom-made! Let me take a closer look, I need to see if there are special materials and examine the artwork to determine a value. All you need to know is that I'll buy it."

After Thani gave it to him, Saroo began by feeling the cards, after which he made a few notes. Then he examined every drawing on the cards one by one, twenty-four in total. From Oakbud's descriptions and his own deductions, he was able to guess at the effects of each card when used with fate magic.

"This has no resell value, only collectors could be interested, the maker is probably the only one who could use them. I can give you five gold for it right now, or you can try your luck at an auction in the entertainment quarter."

"No time and empty pockets, I'll take the gold."

Having finished their most pressing business, Thani and Oakbud were now free to roam. They returned to the Twin Hammers to watch Auri working, but he told them the magic infusion would only take place the next day.

In the end, Thani decided to visit the Blazing Ring to get herself a pair of earrings and a necklace, before going back to the inn's room to practice magic.