

《The Forest Spirit who sought the Gods》

30 Rocking the world

From the moment the dragon and Nyx's message arrived at their respective destinations, the news of the death of the God-Tree started to spread all around. Through the city first, then to others by using messenger birds and blessed beasts to transmit the message as fast as possible! Wind elementalists and Time mages were especially appreciated under these circumstances, as they could accelerate the speed of the messengers.

The morning after, half of the Primal was already informed of the thunderous news. The death of a God! Even if the Tree wasn't one, he was revered as such anyway and held a special place in the heart of the people. In Ebb, Talia was even forced to show herself to put an end to the clamours ringing in her temple from all the people who wanted to bring her the news.

With this speed, the news would barely take three days to reach the farthest reaches of the known continent. The answer of Talia started accompanying the message now to appease the unrest it brought.

Completely unaware of the storm he had kicked as the news hadn't caught up to them yet, Oakbud and his little team continued their voyage quietly, on land for a few days. God's Eye island was not big, at twice the size of Ebb, and its population was a few thousand at best. Fishermen on the coast, farmers on the inside, and no city to speak of. The biggest hub was a trade counter on the west side that linked to Ebb in the south and another city in the north.

The local specialty was a plant, a short tree dubbed "God's Eye Stalk" by the residents, and fields of it covered the majority of space here. Its uses were almost limitless : its roots and fruits could be eaten, the trunk was thick and robust enough for construction, and the thick leaves never dried as long as they stayed over the island, enabling one to make clothes or waterproof housing easily. The reason for the nickname was half the location, and half the entire species of tree being Blessed.

The two-day trip across the island was the occasion to relax after the lake incident for Alice, and to practice magic for the other two. Re-supplying included buying back food since the previous bag drowned with the rowing golem, clothes, and a pair of alchemical lights.

"I can't believe travelling could be so relaxing. This is so much better than carriages! I'm almost ready to forgive you now!"

Alice was enjoying her ride, princess carried in a golem's arms and shielded from the sun by an umbrella made of Stalk leaves. Even though its steps were heavy, the arms acted as a cushion to make movement as smooth as possible.

"Wouldn't you be better off practicing magic a bit? You've done nothing but sleeping and eating since we've come ashore." Thani was flapping her now majestic blood wings, flying circles over the golem's head with Oakbud on her own. "Look at me, I was barely able to hover two days ago but I can fly freely for a good minute or two now!"

"Thani real fairy now! Thani fly!"

"Who says I'm not practicing? I just don't need to move! Shadow magic is all about movement and presence, but there's no need to run around to practice magical flux and spells. I admit it's not something perfectible without serious practice, especially [break], but I can at least think in peace for my future path."

Illustrating her point, Alice stretched herself, and in a puff of darkness shifted from laying in its arms to sitting on the golem's shoulder with the umbrella in her hand. Thani landed in her previous spot, taking a seat in the golem's arms with a big sigh.

"Fair enough. Haaaah... Damn, flying really does a number on my magic reserves. I really need to work harder on the blood arts if I want to be able to use them freely. Tattoos are only the baby-step."

"You're so strong already, what's next for you?"

Thani only answered after a delay, her mood broken by the seemingly innocent question.

"... I don't know. I have not prayed since the depart from Pilgrim Woods."

After Kali's intervention that fateful night, Thani hadn't felt the need or any urge to worship her Goddess. At first, she attributed it to the fact that the powerful contact was enough for a time, and that she would need time to absorb everything she learned before making any more progress. She had been almost fanatical in the past, sacrificing her flesh everyday in the temple. But now, that change was disturbing ; was she close to Kali, or was she not? Why did she have such powerful blessings? She hadn't met anyone at her level before ; even Fabrice, with four blessings too, wasn't

nearly as strong and well-rounded as she was.

Unaware of the chains of doubt and fear on their companion's heart, Alice and Oakbud were teasing each other by dueling with thrown pebbles. The little spirit was at times jumping around, at others thrown up by earth magic and bombarding the little girl mercilessly. In exchange, she took the opportunity to practice her [break], rending the little stones and earth clumps to dust and riposting with the one she managed to grab.

In Pilgrim Woods, Harp and Karj had barely slept, and stayed right in front of the temple's doors. The dragon's reaction to the statue had shown them he had history with the Goddess, and with his warning they didn't dare knock even when dawn passed. People started meeting in front of the temple, preparing themselves to meet the godlike creature again.

When the door rumbled open, they were greeted by volcanic air and blazing heat. They prepared to show respect and resume the previous day's discussion, but were stopped by the look in Nidhögran's eyes.

"You mortals... Know nothing. NOTHING! NOTHING OF EVEN THE GODDESS YOU WORSHIP!" The simple sight of Kali's worshippers was enough to kindle the dragon's rage, completely different from the day before. His magic started building up around him, enough to press people to the ground and crack the earth under his claws.

"I spent the whole night purifying Little Droplet's temple because of you mortals' foolishness. Let me tell you one thing, and I will not repeat myself. Do not. Ever. Again. Spill. A single. Drop. Of blood. In that fountain. Do not test my patience, because none on this continent will be able to bear another Anger of mine."

The few still conscious trembled under the simmering wrath of the beast. It felt like the arrival of a simple fly would be enough to trigger a cataclysm. With bated breath, none dared stand up, and only waited for Nidhögran to either calm down or continue his speech.

"Now, tell me where Ebb is. And I will not hear another word from you lot."

"N-North, along the sh-shore..." A timid voice answered the dragon, its speaker unknown as everyone was laying face down.

"Hmph!"

With a final roiling cloud of smoke and ash, Nidhögran disappeared from their sight and the crushing pressure disappeared.

"Alive... We're alive..."

"But now what?"

"What as that!"

"The Anger! Kali protect us..."

Panic bloomed after the beast's departure. The mythical Anger... It was said to be a battle of the Gods, which split apart the Primal and gave birth to the Jagged Edges and the Cursed Third. But how could that dragon know about it? That name was only passed down in humanity's writings! The only possibility was both impossible and terrifying : Nidhögran himself had to be alive at the time...

A terrifying roar sounded up high in the heavens, covered in storm clouds. The screaming winds were far from enough to muffle the beast's cry.

"I WANT TO CRUSH THEM ALL! I don't mind the fall of another pantheon of the human race!"

"..."

"I WANT TO KILL SOMETHING!"

"Then what? Have us Three rebuild after you again? You're too selfish, Nidhögran. We haven't even pulled the continents you sank last time out of the water yet."

"I'm so angry! The foolish humans you love so much can't even think correctly, it's scary! But I won't, not this time, not again."

Huffing and puffing, the dragon began his war dance high up in the air, far from any prying eyes of the world. The air burnt, froze, was shredded, space fragmented, as he turned the morning sun to night with his fury.

"What's stopping you this time?"

"I'd miss those brats Kali, Nyx, Liezel and Theomars too much. Oberon though... I really want to give that little prick a good beating. Deva can just go to sleep, I don't care about that wuss. The lovebirds just annoy me. Bah! You'd probably kill me too if I didn't finish your little errand first. As boring as it gets, I still enjoy my life, you know?"