

《The Forest Spirit who sought the Gods》

34 Storm clouds

Thani established a clever code of yes/no answers for Eludia's goblet when they landed, and soon its mysteries were unraveled. With its capacity to fill with any drink the holder desires, the Goddess of Luck used it for... partying. Its only other power was to disappear randomly ; and it only activated when its current owner died or threw it away.

"Too unreasonable... How could a Relic be so use- specialized?! Since when are Gods pranksters?" Alice was grimacing, still bitter about the whole lake experience. She still seemed to smell fish brain on her hand and was in a bad mood overall. Getting thrown back by a previous God's Relics and getting nothing else to show for it didn't help.

"I think it fits the Goddess of Luck quite well. What would she use it for if not drinking, when it's limited to mortal products? Even a healing potion wouldn't do much to help a Child, so to a God?" As perplexed as she was, Thani was the more reasonable one here. They were currently watching a silent exchange between Oakbud and the cup ; it filled with a liquid, Oakbud tasted it and squeaked to demand the next one. Water, wine, beer, cream, distilled alcohols, milk, various potions, honey, syrup, dew, blood, sap, it had them all and more.

The water fairy had left before they arrived on the shore, eager to go and extort more crystals from other lake travelers. Come to think of it, she had lost close to an entire day of mischief by accompanying Oakbud's party ; and she would definitely make sure to get back up to par. Despite their protests, she had refused to tell them more about the Anger and what happened during it. That would be left to survivor Gods to explain.

The little underwater expedition made them miss their original mark, an they had to walk half a day before arriving at the trading village they aimed for at the beginning. It served as a harbor, and regrouped multiple trading routes coming from the north and east towards God's Eye Island. It didn't have and didn't need a name, and was simply called the North Point. Along the coast, in relative proximity to the Island, were in the same fashion the East and South Points.

These regroupments were nothing more than a few wooden cabins and docks, with the only residents being boat handlers ; they survived entirely on the flux of people and goods coming their way.

The good news, was that thanks to Oakbud learning water magic, they didn't need to bother carrying gourds and other heavy reserves for their future travels.

The bad news, was that they finally learned of the divine message of Nyx when discussing with other people. Going west of the Third? They were northeast of the great lake right now! That trip would take months, and nobody sane would accept to use their boat to bring them there! In spite of the pressure it brought, they didn't change their original course and continued towards the Ocean's Guard mountains to the east. A few weeks of difference wouldn't matter to the Goddess.

"Shouldn't we turn back and go to the sea? If you're looking for Gods and Goddesses, one just told you where she is. Is it really worth it to complete the trip to the mountains right now?" Alice asked.

"And what if we miss one by turning back? We would have to make another return trip here afterwards to make sure, adding months and months of travel. I don't dislike sightseeing, but that's way too long for my taste." After answering, Thani turned to Oakbud to hear his opinion.

"Me know where Nyx is, so me can go whenever! Meet God friend in the mountains now, say hello!" Enthusiast as ever, Oakbud was happy to go anywhere and do anything as long as it helped him meet more of his dad-tree's friends, even if they weren't sure they would find one where they went.

Thus they continued on their initial route.

"Hmmm? Who dares fly over the great me?" The groggy Nidhögran was woken up when he felt a strong power pass over his head. Sleeping was no excuse for being unaware when one reached his level of might. "Wait, isn't it the magic of Ole' Time? Is he chasing after the little one too?"

"Most certainly. Time's current Child is a poor excuse of a living being, and absolutely hates his God." Elements was the one to answer the dragon's question. Since he decided to sleep, the God was bored, and because they finally had a clear way of finding Oakbud, Elements couldn't really punish him either without appearing too petty.

"A Child hating his God? Is that even possible?" After a final leaves-incinerating yawn, Nidhögran was wide awake and ready to sate his curiosity.

"It is. The hardest part is not wiping the mortal's consciousness if he rejects the bestowal. For this one... he's a textbook heretic. Using mortal taboos of magic, going against the order set by his God, even trying to usurp his domain." The God of Elements took his time to recount Jack's story to Nidhögran, since he was asleep at the time his grand time reversal spell was cast.

"Ooooh, ballsy. Dumb, though. Let me guess, he found a relic or something similar and wanted to use a shortcut to divinity? Hehe, so foolish, so foolish."

"Not exactly. He indeed found writings from a past Child, but he didn't aspire to divinity, only a long life. He tried to sacrifice his whole domain and his people to turn back the clock of his life."

"And he didn't straight up kill him? I know I would have!" After laughing to himself for a bit, shaking the tree and scaring off every bird in the vicinity, Nidhögran thought a bit more before speaking again. "What am I saying, of course he wouldn't kill him. His actions crossed his bottom line, death would be too easy a way out. So that's why he's the Child now? Ole'Time is just having his fun tormenting the guy?"

"Depends on how you see it. You know he's the one who likes humans the most among us Three. Yes, he's tormenting him and bringing him at his wit's end ; he tore apart the grand spell formation, bringin ruin to everything it encompassed, be it people, animals, the city, and even the elements themselves ; it's a dead zone now. He could have let him perish with it, but he didn't, because he wants to bring him back on a correct path. But it hasn't borne fruit for now, and if he's going to try and kill the little Oakbud like I think he is, Time will probably end the game right there and then."

"Bring him back, eh? Redeeming, really? He's bored, no need for flowery words... Don't tell him that though, I know he still hasn't and probably never will forgive me for the Anger. I owe you more than my fragile sanity for that one." Thinking about his own past, Nidhögran couldn't help but shiver a bit. His own madness had brought ruin to entire continents, sinking them under the ocean. He extinguished millions of lives, and almost wiped out humanity. But Time's anger... that was on another scale entirely ; he had crossed the line by far too much, and his life would have been forfeit if not for Elements and Nature interceding in his favor. Being one of the first creations had some perks to it.

After a last sigh, the dragon got up, stretched like a cat without forgetting to leave deep claw marks in the bark, and soared to the skies without wasting time. After being awake for months now, and under the current pressure, the dragon's hubris was finally coming back under control, and his lazy side was receding in stride.

"So he's coming, huh. Let's go now, so much for the nap. I don't want to get there

during the aftermath. We'll have a lead of a few days at best considering how fast he was going."