

# 《The Forest Spirit who sought the Gods》

## 35 Downpour

After another few days of walking and getting carried by a golem (depending on the mood), Oakbud, Thani and Alice were halfway to the mountain range and could already see the peaks in the distance. If they kept up the pace, they should be able to reach the town there in three days, and after that they could take their time exploring the Ocean's Guard.

Their plan was bound to be disrupted this fine morning because of Nidhögran, who followed Kali's divinity present in Thani and finally found them. He was currently high up above the clouds, concocting another silly plan of his for the sake of fun. As old as he was, he had spent so much time sleeping that he wasn't at the point of total boredom yet, where he would have seen everything the world had to offer. His problem of conflicting elements and regular memory damage also helped in that respect.

"Hmmm Hmmm Hmmm 🎵. I want to follow them for a bit and see, but I don't want to scare them. At least not yet. I know! I can just transform to something harmless-looking." Scratching his chin with a claw, his thinking expression appeared very human. If one was facing him right now however, he would worry about being eaten or not due to the shine of interest in his eyes.

"Like the time you impersonated the Sea God to be left alone? Remember it was only harmless to you... Congratulations on traumatizing the sea folk, I think they pass it down in their stories still." The dragon protested immediately, not wanting his reputation harmed. Sure, he scared people sometimes, but never for the sake of it, he wasn't a sadist!

"But he was an octopus! How harmful is that?"

"A gigantic Kraken you mean... That you ended up eating. Thogoss's must have been the most unfair of deaths during your Anger, he wasn't even involved." There was no rebuking one of the Three though, especially when he knew more about the event than Nidhögran himself during his madness. Admitting his defeat, he started pondering again and scrapped the idea of appearing as a 'simple' drake.

"Alright alright, you win. Uuuuuuuuuuuuh. How does a pixie sound? I can still keep my elements like that. Yeah, sounds good, only a bit small. Pixie, hmm hmm hmm 🎵. I wonder if they know about Nyx yet."

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Thani was taking a nap in the golem's arms, so it was Alice's turn to keep an eye out for things around them and lead the magical construct. Oakbud had flown somewhere after possessing a bird of prey he killed with a scream ; who asked it to mistake him for his lunch? After his practice of water and earth magic, he had taken upon himself the further study of his original abilities. He learned to focus and aim his spiritual attack, boosting its range and power tremendously. If he were to fight Ellen the water elemental again, he would be able to win without too much difficulty now. The prize fighters like Thani, Fabrice and even the versatile Alice were still out of his reach though.

The women weren't worried, because they knew the little spirit had a connection with the golem and could feel its location ; wherever he went, he would be fly back after satisfying his curiosity.

The moment of peace was broken by Nidhögran, who revealed himself in a flashy burst of embers and magical fire. Proud as he was, he chose a flamboyant style of entrance to say the least. The fire he summoned changed from flying erratically to flowing around his new body, before finally crystallizing into a diadem on his forehead and draping over his shoulders to make a blazing cape of ash and fiery veins.

He was laying in the air in front of the golem, supported by two majestic gossamer wings with rainbow reflections. His body looked human, the only mystery left being the legs covered by a gem-ornemented pair of pants. The pixie's muscles were sculpted all over, and sported strong and wide shoulders. The draconic heritage couldn't be hidden, and Nidhögran made the best out of it by integrating brilliant vermilion scales on his torso, shoulders, back and other articulations such as his wrists and elbow.

His head was also a culmination of beauty, clear and sharp eyes with his characteristic slitted blazing pupils, chiseled face bones and jaw, a fine and straight nose, and finally a collection of scintillating scales on his forehead which faded into a heap of waist-length crimson-auburn straight hair.

He was the picture-perfect emperor of all spirits, emitting unparalleled magical strength and a regal aura. Fire was his first and favourite element, after all, and years did nothing to change that.

Under his unrestrained efforts, he was confident that even the ever-arrogant and vain Nyx would admit her inferiority. The creation of this transformation made him into the

ultimate ladykiller, if not for one thing.

He was barely 80cm tall.

"HAHAHA! Tremble before this king, mortals! What are you doing in my domain!"

Thani was startled awake and had her dagger already in hand, glancing around to find what in the Gods' name had interrupted her nap. She soon joined Alice in her examination of the draconic fairy emperor in front of them, in awe of his looks and power alike.

"Hahaha. Cat got your tongue? Answer me before I send you back in a snap of my fingers. Don't think it would take more than that." The disguised dragon was happily strutting around, showing off as much as he could. Foolish mortals... So dumb, but also so entertaining. The looks on their face were priceless.

Alice started mumbling in disbelief under her breath with wide eyes : "Ooooh fuck not again. Not again. That's totally water pixie number two. No way I'm falling for it. That's not a fairy at all!"

Sadly for her, Nidhögran's ears were sharp, and he heard her loud and clear. Confident as he was in his disguise, being revealed as a fake was a fatal blow. Alas, his unstable temperament prevented him from keeping a poker face in front of the wild guess.

"What? A fake? But... But? How did you know? Damn it, even Deva can't see through me! Tell me how! So unfair!" The dragon completely lost his composure, and flew over to Alice to grab her by the collar, before lifting her up in the air with him. His face was distorted with an ugly grimace full of disbelief and anger. Alice got paler by the second when she felt the full brunt of the magical power radiating out of the unknown being in front of her. Thani was frowning, but wouldn't make a move without being certain the fake fairy had bad intentions ; for now it looked like a bad actor looking to have fun was aggravated when his disguise was broken. And how right she was!

"I was right?"

"..."

Almost in a whisper, Alice could only get a few words of disbelief out. Hearing that, Nidhögran instantly understood that she was only guessing and probably had encountered something similar before. And that the fault for breaking character was all his. And that he could have gotten away with it easily. And that the situation was very embarrassing for his status. He couldn't just burn them all to wipe away the blunder, because they were the ones he wanted to meet. The little human in front of him was

just that paranoiac.

"FUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUCK! I'M SO DUMB! DAMN IT ALL!"

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After his outburst, Nidhögran put Alice down and revealed his true form. At least, a scaled-down version of it, only elephant-sized. Just like his meeting with Harp under the God-Tree, he had to use a calm spell for the duration of his explanations. Otherwise Thani would have never stayed, and Alice would maybe die from sheer shock.

He was not a bad guy, wouldn't harm them, was here to meet the lady with white hair here and the creature linked to the golem, and only that. Once they managed to accept the situation and calm down by themselves, the dragon, who was still sighing at his own stupidity for ruining his show, jolted the golem to call Oakbud back quicker.

The real meeting could finally begin once the little spirit was back, leaving Thani wondering why a dragon would want to see her. When he felt the dragon's might, he instantly asked him : "Are you dad-tree's friend?"

"Yes and no, little one. I'm not a god, but I've met the Stalwart Oak before. I'm here to tell you two things, and one to the white-haired human here." The little spirit's enthusiasm was cooled down instantly. On the other hand, Thani began to really worry ; she still hadn't resolved her problems with her faith, and that dragon looked like bad news. "First, I'm curious about you, and that's why I wanted to come and meet you in person. It's not everyday a new life is created, and you are special indeed. You're one of a kind in my whole long life. Look."

Extending a claw, the dragon made a little flame burn bright at its tip. Soon, under the concentrated flow of power, the fire birthed life, and a fire spirit was born under their incredulous eyes. Happy to see the dragon, it began flying around his head and horns in a playful manner, barely stopping to look at the humans.

"See? That's a spirit, you can call them a pixie if they take a humanish shape. Born of a powerful concentration of magic and an element." There, he extinguished his flame, and the spirit disappeared with a last wave of the hand and a smile.

"They have consciousness, they can learn, live, laugh, use magic even. But they can never stray too far from their source, otherwise they will cease to exist ; same if their source is killed, like I did with the flame. They are very ephemereal and can even decide to dissipate on their own, they have no concept of life and death."

Alice couldn't help but ask : "But we met a water pixie on the lake, and she appeared

and disappeared multiple times in front of us, and she remembered! Was she a fairy?"

"That's different. If you're referring to what you call God's Eye Lake, she is an ancient being like me and possesses traces of divinity. She's not simply a water spirit, she is the very incarnation of the lake, the lake is not her source like a regular spirit. That's why she could do that. Fairies are a fully fledged species just like you humans, they just don't live close to you so you tend to mistake one for the other."

"Why is me special? Water fairy said me is a spirit!"

"She doesn't know enough, being forever unable to travel is a fatal weakness in her knowledge. I was there when the first of your Gods ascended, kids. You'd better listen to me."

At this declaration, none of them could help but tremble. That dragon was a monster amongst monsters!

"Come on, don't get scared now. I've more to tell still..." Seeing their reaction, he shook his massive head before continuing and looking at Oakbud: "You are special because you are not born from an element, but from the life of the God-Tree, and validated by the divinity of the Three. You are the newest creation of the Three, a complete existence, the first of your kind in this world. Your potential, like mine was, is limitless. But for your future path... I see you've begun learning the elements. Promise me one thing, do not make the same mistake I did. Never integrate yourself with the elements completely. If one day you learn about the Anger in detail, you will understand why. I have no right to tell you."

Alice began wishing she wasn't there. This kind of conversation touching taboo topics and secrets of life and magic in the world were too much for her. Thani only listened with furrowed brows on the side. The first lesson with Nature helped her a lot, and she could feel the same intent from the dragon in front of her : "Are you the Child of a God, to be able to know all this?"

"... No." He answered Thani after a short hesitation, short enough for Elements to tell him not to reveal his presence. "I'm just an old being of this world. Don't underestimate what tens of thousands years of life and meeting with Gods can teach you."

Somehow she had the impression that he didn't tell the truth. But before she could continue her enquiry, hesitating to push it further, the dragon began talking to Oakbud again. She let it go ; if he didn't want to tell, what rights did she have to ask anyway?

"Now onto my second reason to speak to you : you are in great danger. The Child of Time is coming after you, and he is not friendly. He loathes anything that has a link to

Ole'Time, and will surely seek to destroy you completely. Prepare yourself, because you can't hide from him, and he will arrive soon after I leave."

"Dad-Tree's friend is not a friend?"

"Ole'Time is, but not his Child. I can't tell how your meeting will go, and I won't interfere either." Finished with his discourse, he turned to Thani.

"You're special as well, you know? So young, yet so strong. Have you never asked yourself why? Don't bother answering, I can see your faltering gaze. You've begun understanding some things, and you're lost. And now that I've seen you, I'm absolutely sure of my conjecture."

"How... How could you know anything? I won't let you shake my belief in Kali!" She looked scared, and was forcing herself not to shake.

"I don't need to, because it's Kali herself who has severed you from her."

There was no answer, only Thani's pale face streaked with unending tears and a broken heart.