

# 《The Forest Spirit who sought the Gods》

## 50 Slack tide

"Alright, please sit down here and show me your arm."

Jacques' weak voice pulled the nereid following him out of her reverie when they stepped in his laboratory. The door frames were humiliatingly low for Ashirijen, but the man had the sensibility to not speak of it; what stopped her wasn't that though, but the vast array of strange equipment everywhere in the messy room.

Like he had said, the plants had burnt by now and the rancid stench of hot ashes assailed her. Living underwater didn't allow one to smell the same array of odours as on the surface and this one was new to her. Tweezers of all sizes, boilers, knives, spikes, drying enclosures, compost, distillation apparatuses, dissection table... are those shackles? She didn't even want to know what else was stored in the cupboards.

"The more I see the less I feel like trusting you with my problem. I'm not exactly inclined to sit down right now, mind telling me what this is all for instead?"

After pushing Jacques back when he over-enthusiastically tried to grab her, they had stayed in the house's main room for a bit and discussed some important topics. Important to her at least, including what he's doing here instead of a bigger city, is he always in such a rush, if he could really solve the problem of clothes and/or of her mucus on land, and some more questions about him being a Child.

The more she heard, the more she was convinced he had a screw loose. But in the end, she still relented and accepted to be a lab rat for a bit. She was having second thoughts right now though, and it showed as the fins on her body had begun rising all the way up like a threatened beast would do.

Jacques only smiled in answer; too many people reacted the same way when they stepped in his lab for the first time, and Kali's Child was no exception. "Cut it, scrape it, boil it, refine it, burn it, dry it, rot it, keep it, cultivate it, you name it, I can do that here! You don't need to worry though; I'll only be taking some mucus from your arm in a tub before running some experiments on it. Just like you remarked before, I'm just a puny mortal compared to any magic practitioner. What could I do to you?"

"You're playing a dangerous game, little man. If a God was so bored as to choose a mortal, I don't think he'd miss you either."

"Oh, I wouldn't be so sure about that. Quite the opposite in fact, if you think about it. I must be quite extraordinary in his eyes. He chose a mortal who's willingly ignoring him, and didn't kill such a pest outright? Hohoho. Now that's what I call patience."

"You'd call waiting a single second for food to cool down patience... why bother heating it up in the first place?"

Under the persistent squabbles and threats raised, Jacques never stopped moving and had started preparing multiple things. He had to verify why the mucus was secreted while learning more about its properties, otherwise the solution wouldn't be efficient.

After she wiped her body with a hand into a basin and filled it, Jacques signed Ashirijen to follow before pointing her to...

"Is that a fish tank? Do you have a death wish?"

Her imposing aura came back full blast, and this time there was enough killing intent mixed in for the old man to feel it directly. The shock woke him up, and he gulped. When he turned around to apologize, he faced the nereid's chilling glare... and the tip of her spear. He was really too far gone in his desire to study things this time, and inadvertently touched one of the most taboo subjects around sea-dwellers: captivity. Too many had been captured and abused by immoral people for their entertainment. Slave trade wasn't widespread, but it still existed and foreign species were the most prized goods anywhere.

"Just for your arm... please? I need to make sure it's not being produced in the water too. We'll use another smaller one and see if the water thickens."

"One more time. Just one more time, I dare you. I will kill you right here in the most painful and cruel way I know, using your dearest knives in this madhouse." If the earlier threats were just for her to remind him not to push her too far or humiliate her... then this one was entirely serious. And she wouldn't forgive him for this slip of the tongue easily either, intentional or not.

Luckily for both, there was no "next time". Contrary to almost everything else it seemed, Jacques wasn't especially in a rush to die. Ashirijen's continuous cold glare coupled with the spear she refused to put down anymore also helped him to maintain his focus on the right things.

The results were pretty much what was expected following the previous discussion. Her skin produced a layer of mucus to isolate it from air and perhaps direct sunlight. The layer wouldn't be replaced as long as it wasn't wiped off by something, and it wasn't produced when her skin was underwater either; that was actually the best way

to wash it off. Drying it over a flame would leave some residues, but it didn't lose its moisture easily otherwise. All in all, its slipperiness and durability made it very performant in its base task and could also double as lubricant; that last idea was demonstrated on a door's hinges by a smirking Jacques so no other ideas would come to her already riled up mind.

By the time it was said and done night had fallen, and food had been skipped. This didn't bother either Children though: Jacques was used to absorbing himself in his research and often skipped meals, while Ashirijen didn't need to eat three times a day like humans. Like she said before, she decided to use the cover of the dark to make her way back to the water; seeing her to the door, Jacques let out a big sigh of relief and went right back to work. In his own opinion, time sleeping was time wasted, and he also wanted something to show to the nereid the following day so she wouldn't wreck everything in anger.

"So, aren't you going to tell me who the God of this little man is?" Ashirijen was floating on the shallow water facing the night sky, tail curled around her spear anchored into the floor. "Finally some quiet...", She murmured with her eyes closed.

"You'll guess soon enough; he will start changing soon." Kali had indeed been looking and listening through her Child, following her actions during the first day of contact. "I really thought you'd kill him though... I have rarely seen you lose your temper like that."

"All for my Goddess," she sighed.

--

While one spent the night toiling, the other caught any fish dumb enough to swim into her arm's reach and only let fishbones drift away while waiting half-asleep for the night to pass. When the sky brightened from the very first rays of the sun a few hours later, Ashirijen made her way back to Jacques's house, freshwater glistening like polished pearls on her scales and exposed skin. She couldn't afford to wait more, be it to see what the madman had probably tried to make throughout the night or to avoid the early risers going out in the first direct rays of morning light.

The old man was still running around restlessly in his lab, going back and forth between seemingly random workbenches and cupboards to the basin of mucus Ashirijen had left there the night before. He only noticed the presence of the imposing nereid when she got in arm's reach of him, startling him badly in the process.

"Wha! ... Don't come in without knocking like this! What will you do if I fall flat from such a bad fright?"

"I actually did knock.", she answered with a raised brow. "So? What's this strange stuff? I'm pretty sure my mucus wasn't like that when I left it there." The secretions were still transparent, but seemed to have hardened a bit, as well as acquired some elasticity and a slightly murky colour when she put a finger in to see what it was like. The tired face of the passionate researcher lit up when he heard the question: it was finally time to boast about the fruits of his hard work!

"Absolutely right! Correct! It's not the same thing at all anymore! Listen, this is how it's done and what you'll be able to do with it: first, ..." Before she could react, Jacques had launched himself in a long discourse of complicated alchemical reactions, strange plant names and all kinds of other incomprehensible stuff.

"...and with this you'll be able to wear it like a second skin..."

"...effectively isolate from air..."

"...won't get washed off easily..."

"... So! What do you think! Are puny humans not awesome even without magic? Hm? Hmmm?"

The long litany stopped abruptly after a quarter of an hour leaving Ashirijen, who had decided to look elsewhere to skip the boring stuff a minute in, face-to-face with an excited and ready to blow Jacques waiting for her reaction.

Despite her dislike of humans and his help, she felt a bit bad to burst his bubble, but she really didn't understand anything of what he said. "That's great," she said in a forced tone to get out of the awkward situation, "can we try the stuff yet?"

"Yes, yes, yes! Absolutely! Don't forget to tell me your impressions as you do please!" Jacques was staring at her intensely with a fire that put her off a little.

Tentatively, she put her hand in and out of the container and gave it an experimental lick.

"Blah! Cough! Koff! What the fuck did you put in there!" She started spitting everywhere and even used her second hand to wipe her tongue free of the strange liquid.

"It's not meant for consumption! Oh Gods I forgot to tell you with all the excitement! You only apply it on your skin!" He looked genuinely worried about the grimacing nereid. "Alright, I'll show you first so you can see how it should be done. Jacques grabbed a towel he had prepared close to the modified mucus container and started the demonstration on his own arm. He started by wetting then wringing it and used the

towel to wipe the area of skin he'd cover. Then, he scooped a small handful of the stuff and let it flow in a thin layer over the exposed skin, letting the surplus flow back to the container.

Find authorized novels in Webnovel, faster updates, better experience, Please click [www.novelhall.com](http://www.novelhall.com) for visiting.

"There! Just give it a few seconds and it'll have dried enough to work perfectly. You have to make sure you've wiped the skin area properly so none of your original mucus is left when you apply the new one." He blew on it a few times, and started showing its other properties: "See? I can stretch it a bit with my fingers here, meaning it won't bother you or tear near your articulations or fins, and it's almost invisible. You'll be able to wear clothes like everyone else. Look, I'm pouring a flask of water on my arm and it's not getting washed off, so you can even still swim as much as you want; you'd need to scrub it off purposefully to get it off... with the towel for example."

Lost in his explanations again, he missed Ashirijen folding her long body to slither into the small container and starting to cover her whole body with his creation. By the time he was done, she was applying finishing touches to her face area with her fingers, wiping it bit by bit with another piece of cloth. After trying it out, she found that it was indeed very convenient.

"Breath-taking! Screw your useless stuffy clothes, this stuff seems to work. It's not even sticky once it's dried for a bit! Now give me map and some other stuff like money and we can get going. I never thought I'd be able to kick some land-dweller ass comfortably but thanks to you that's not a dream anymore."

Still a man facing a seemingly naked woman, he wanted to tell her that she was the breath-taking one however remembering her previous wrath he abstained from the comment. The social values and habits of sea-dwellers were very different from the humans', but their physical resemblance made things awkward at times; like now. She was a warring beauty indeed.

As happy as he was with the positive feedback from the now grinning Ashirijen, his reflections on other possible applications were broken when he heard the last part of her answer.

"...We?"