

Essence of Time - The Forgotten Journey

Von Deamond

Kapitel 34:

Chapter 34

Evening. Time had passed so fast, the sun was already about to set. The cool fresh breeze of the forest entered the city, bringing the scent of fruits and flowers into the streets.

The three men still waited at the entrance-hall of the Inn for the girls to come down. As far as Callo could hear with his keen ears, they were running around between their rooms and the bath-room, chatting all the time about things Callo couldn't quite hear... they seemed to talk all at the same time... How did girls do it that they were talking wildly between each other's sentences, yet they understood anything the others said?!

Zeyir played around with his cape, whistling bored while moving his fingers over the newly added ornaments. Allen tried to balance a glass with water on his finger, almost spitting the liquid all over him accidentally. Luckily he was always fast enough though to catch it before it fell down...

Finally steps were heard on the stairs. Unimpressed, Zeyir looked up to see Nuramond coming down first. She wore a typical forest-elven robe. Green and golden ornaments on a silky white dress, knotted together with golden strings. The long gloves were almost invisible. It really was a fine fabric, waving around her skin seemingly without gravity. Her hair was hanging loosely around her shoulders, decorated with small white flowers every here and there.

Smiling she went over to Callo, taking his arm.

"Alright, I hope you don't mind me wearing a forest-robe?" She looked at the tan elf with happy eyes.

"I don't mind it." Callo sighed... It was the first time he went out with someone else than Serena... this felt so strange! But it was just a ball and it was just for the purpose to get permission to enter the Cathedral of Nature! So there was nothing about it! He nodded and looked at the others. Allen was staring upstairs, Callo would have sworn his eyes would fall out at any possible second... But as he looked up, he understood why.

Raven stood on top of the stairs, presenting herself. Her dark bangs were ornamented with little green and brown jewels, fixed to her hair with golden strings. Her sort green dress sparkled and the texture of it looked almost like basilisk-scales. Over it she wore a toga of the same material as Nura Mond's sleeves. On her arms golden bracelets and leather-bands hand freely, making little sounds while moving. The high leather-sandals matched perfectly with the overall image. She looked as if she wanted to go to a royal ball, but still... her wild and free-spirited nature shone through the cloths, matching the over-all image.

"And now we proudly present..." She grinned and stepped aside. "By the way I needed over an hour to fix Narwa's hair..." She added sarcastically. "Asgard's silver orchid! Tadadada!"

Zeyir almost fell from his chair as he spotted the white beauty. His face-color matched perfectly with his eyes at the moment...

Narwa's hair was indeed spectacular. Her long silver mane was knotted with hundreds of little white flowers into an almost net-like structure, falling over the rest of her hair. Little blue gems hang from two bangs she had falling over her shoulders. She wore the dress she usually wore on Asgardian festivities when she had to present herself the best way she could... and damn it did...

"I... is something wrong?" The goddess asked nervously, patting over her white dress. The silk-like fabric showed her body-shape perfectly, framing her with every movement. Small angel-wing-decorations ran down her hips over her legs, almost invisible, but still there... On the white necklace, a piece of fabric hang down on her, over her shoulders while a second one hang loosely like a toga around her slender gloved arms.

"D-don't... you think you... over did it a little?" Zeyir just said the first thing that came to his mind, rewarded with a smack from the witch... "Hey!"

"I-I'm not! That's what I always wear during balls!" She snapped, looking down on him. She searched something to complain about but... couldn't find anything... dammit... "A-and you could have done something with your hair!"

"Sure. Or I could just-"

"Okay, guys, enough exchange of lovability..." Raven cut between them, rolling her eyes. These two were so childish... But still somehow she thought of them as a great match! If these two weren't able to attract the lords attention, none of them would for sure... She just prayed they were going to attract it by their positive behaves, not by yelling at each other... "Let's just get this over with!!"

The Forest-Temple was more like a castle. Built on the tree's branches, the marble-palace guarded over the city, overlooking the thousands of houses on the bottom. Little fireflies made candles on the stairway up to the entrance almost unnecessary,

illuminating the path in a surreal light.

As the six of them finally arrived on the entrance, two elven-guards stopped them, asking for their invitations. Especially Callo earned some mistrusting looks...

Nuramond handed over the three letters, taking the tan man's arm, making clear that if anyone dared to pick on him, they had to handle with her...

"Very well... Welcome to the ball." The guard bowed respectfully, leading the little group inside.

Most of the guasts were forest-elves, wearing lighter colors like soft blue, green, yellow or white. That alone made the companions outstanding from the rest... leave alone Callo as the only desert-elf around against all the forest-elves here... They just prayed no one would dare teasing him... They didn't want to know how they reacted on his 'tree-hugging poets'-comment...

"Oh, look!" Allen pointed over at a side-room. "They have a buffet. I gotta check that out. Are you coming too, Raven?" He didn't actually wait for an answer, just dragging her along. But she didn't really care. Some food would do her good!

Callo sighed and looked over to Zeyir.

"Alright, guess we will split here. We will meet at latest 3 am at the entrance again. Understood?" From the sound of Callo's voice, Zeyir could have sworn he would have loved to say midnight instead of 3 am...

"Alright, gotcha!" He grinned and waved in good-bye as the tan man and the green-haired girl disappeared in the masses. The demon looked at the woman by his side and how she crossed her arms in front of her belly, almost as if she felt cold. 'This is going to be a long evening...' He moved his white-gloved fingers through his hair before turning to the goddess, taking her hand in a gentleman-like manner. "Okay, Narwa, I know you don't like me, but at least this evening we will have to come along." He looked directly into her deep sapphire eyes. "Just think of me as... one of your god whatever guys you'd prefer going to a ball with, alright?"

"..." Narwa hesitated. She closed her eyes. 'I don't want to go with anyone else here but with you...' She whispered mentally, well aware that the demon-prince next to her could not read her mind... "I... will do my best to make it as easy for you as possible."

"I'd love to say, just act like yourself, but we know how that would end, right?" He grinned sheepishly, earning a kick on his foot as reward.

"Idiot." She added before taking his hand in a princess-like way, following him to the dance-floor.

Callo in the meantime had a rather rough time keeping Nuramond's forest-friends

from killing him... No matter what he said it was always the wrong thing... He sighed and just prayed someone could make the time run along a little faster... it had been only 15 minutes so far and he was more exhausted than after an hour of training...

"So, how is it living in the burning sun with nothing but rotten trees around?" A male elf with blonde short hair asked sarcastically. Of course Callo noticed the mocking sound in his voice, but at least this night he had to suppress the urge to chop some heads off... Come on, it couldn't be that hard to not kill someone!

"I heard you have to put a lot of spice into your food to keep it from turning un...enjoyable..." The girl-friend of the elf that was trying to mock Callo seemed to want to impress her love, adding random things to anything he said, just to stay part of the conversation.

"Yes, that is indeed true. The hard conditions in a desert taught us ways to live even with poor supplies." Callo prayed they wouldn't find anything to tease him with that too... Nuramond was gone to get them some drinks, but in the meantime her so called friends had just plenty of time teasing him all along...

"So, if you have to over-spice your food all the time, I am sure you lost sense for the fine differences between tastes, unable to enjoy the variety of nature's rich table." After that comment Callo really wished he hadn't left his rapiers with Grenlin in the Inn...

"If you want to say with this that I am unable to differ between the taste of an apple and a raspberry, I have to correct you. I am very well able to enjoy more than just over-spiced food." Sighing he looked around. Where was Nuramond when you needed her?! She would have kicked them for that comment! And as a forest-elf she didn't have to fear to get kicked out for it...

"You are all followers of Sol?"

Callo's gut felt like twitching. If he dared saying something about his faiths now, the boy was dead...

"Yeah, but that doesn't mind the desert-elves are single-minded, right Master Moerbin?" Shade popped out of nowhere, bowing respectfully in front of her master. She heard a silent 'thanks' coming from him before turning towards the forest-elf again. "My master is one of the high-ranked Lord-Knights of Yora and I am very proud to serve him. After all he was able to form a pact with me in the young age of 9 years, defeating me in fair combat to gain my full trust and power." Callo snorted at the 'combat-comment'... "You see, it is an honor for a simple spirit as myself to serve even under the flag of Sol as a servant of the honorable desert-elves. I'd give my life and Mana for my Master."

"..." The forest-elves blushed, unable to retort anymore. "W-well... I... better fetch us something to drink. Come dear!" They escaped.

"How did you know they-"

"These are forest-elves, Callo." Shade grinned. "They think of your kind as brainless barbarians that try to act intelligent... no matter what you would have said, it wouldn't have kept them from mocking, but they believe in the might and honor of spirits. A forest-elf is said to be only grown up when having formed a pact. So hearing me say you formed one with me in such young age, and I'd even serve under a light-banner kinda took the wind out of their sails!" She grinned evilly, letting herself fall into her master's arms.

"You saved me there." The desert-elf grinned, patting his friend.

"I'd do aaaanything for you, Master Moerbin!" She rolled her eye playfully, totally overacting. "Oh, look! There is Nuramond!"

Raven and Allen in the mean-while had found a nice table at the balcony, enjoying a formidable meal.

"I got to remember that. Salmon in saffron-risotto... I have to try that out next time!" Allen took another bite, overwhelmed with happiness.

"Have you tried the grilled bananas with honey? They are awesome too!" The mercenary chuckled, taking another piece. "Mhhh, have you tried the tiramisu?"

"Yeah, but... it's nothing special. It's lacking cognac. And the biscuits are drowned in cream..." The summoner nodded towards the brown mass in front of him.

"Hehehe..." Raven chuckled and leaned on the man's shoulder. "You are such a gourmet."

"Indeed, I have an exquisite taste, y'know." He giggled and continued eating more of the different desserts.

The dance-floor was rather full, but still anyone had enough place to dance.

Whenever someone dared stepping on Narwa's long dress, he or she earned a dangerous growl from the demon.

Narwa's face was rather red the whole time, but Zeyir guessed it was just from the heat.

"So..." The goddess started, looking deep into the demonic crimson eyes ahead of her. "I thought you couldn't dance?"

"I pretend I can't dance to avoid being asked to dance with the princesses and ladies of other countries on demonic balls. However, pretending and being is something completely different." The prince of Galdor avoided the goddess's gaze, looking around them whoever else was dancing next to them. Narwa noticed his tries to avoid

her however...

"I understand. You don't like dancing then?"

"Yes. I just prefer the art of fighting over the art of dancing, but as a demonic leader, this is not a bad thing, in fact it would be dangerous if it was the other way round for me." He sighed and finally looked into her blue eyes.

"You sound so different today." She giggled, noticing how Zeyir had put a perfect mask on, one he would show as Prince, but she knew it wasn't his real face.

"..." Once again he turned his face from her, pretending to watch a couple next to them.

Narwa sighed. Zeyir just couldn't be helped... But why did he avoid her? She knew he'd never accept her feelings, but being ignored was even worse than being rejected!

"Z... Zeyir?" She started shily. The demon was looking at her again, focusing her with his deep crimson eyes. She could stare for hours into these deep eyes, seeing the little golden parts flicker in the candle-light... "I was... wondering if... well..." She felt her cheeks turning red again. Why had SHE have to fall in love with a demon?! Why?!

"Hm?" The demon's eyes were just about to wander off again, as she took his hand tighter, stepping forward closer to him, lying her second hand on his shoulder. Zeyir looked at her nervously. Now they were really close... what was she thinking?! He had tried avoiding too much contact over all of the evening, just because he knew she'd go all crazy if they had to stay together for too long and now she was even coming closer?! "Wh-what are you-"

"I want to dance with you, and it just feels odd dancing with so much distance." She replied flatly, now ready to really dance with him, enjoying the warmth from his body.

"As... you wish..." Now it was Zeyir's turn to blush. He bit his lips nervously while stepping on.

After a while of dancing in silence, an elven lady suddenly stepped next to them. After a few seconds in which she didn't say a word, Zeyir decided that he was annoyed by the stranger...

"May we help you, Milady?" He asked in a mocking tone.

"Indeed." The lady smiled softly. "My husband and I were wondering if you wanted to continue your dancing on the upper floor with the elven lords and ladies of the Forest-Temple?"

Zeyir was just about to say no as Narwa stepped on his foot, reminding him what they were here for.

"We would love to join you. However we are here with our friends..." Narwa smiled

warmly, bowing politely.

"Of course." The woman smiled back, getting along with her right away. "I will tell the guards to let you and your friends up to the higher floor."

"Thank you very much." The goddess cheered, taking Zeyir's hand, pulling him off the dance-floor. It took them only a couple of minutes to pick annoyed Callo and happy Nuramond, and Allen and Raven from the buffet up.

"I knew you would do it!" Nuramond smiled, Raven agreed with a cheery hug. "Wow, I have never been in the second floor." She took Callo's arm a little tighter.

"..." Zeyir just rolled his eyes. "It was just because we had the right outfits, that's all. Nothing can compare to a prince-suit and a goddess-" Again Narwa kicked his foot. Now that she didn't have her staff with her, that seemed to be her new favorite weapon against him...

"Prince?" Nuramond chuckled, thinking it was a joke. "Anyway, there is a girl named Himikea. If she is here, ask her for permission to enter the Cathedral of Nature... She is responsible for the keepings of the altar and has the most influence in that matter."

"Himikea... alright, I will remember that name." Allen smiled, laying an arm around Raven. "Is there a way to recognize her?"

"I haven't met her in person yet..." The greenhaired elf placed her hands on her hips, thinking for a second. "But I heard she had hair like leaves and long fox ears... I can't really imagine that but... Oh well, that is how it was described to me..."

"Then we will have an eye on that." Callo stated while looking around, hoping the elves up here weren't as picky and mocking as the ones in the lower hall...

"We will go dancing a little more then, okay?" Narwa smiled, taking Zeyir's hand who just looked at his two best friends desperately.

"Eh... you know, now that we are in here, we don't have to-"

"And if I want to?" Narwa turned on the middle of the dance-floor. Zeyir blinked confused, his cheeks turning red. The goddess just smiled and leaned on him a little more, closing her eyes.

"Excuse me? We are looking for Himikea." Nuramond asked an elven woman with a long white robe. She Gazed at the small group confused and surprised, eyeing especially Callo from foot to top... Why did he feel like the black sheep here?!

"She is over there, I think..." The woman said without looking away from Callo, searching for weapons of any sort...

"Thank you very much!" Nuramond bowed gently before following the shown

direction. Allen, Raven and Callo just trotted after her, grateful she was the one leading through the 'pointy eared mass'...

"Kinda hot here..." Zeyir sighed after a while... Up here it was really hotter on than on the lower floor...

"So sensitive today?" Narwa chuckled playfully, her hair waving around loosely.

"I-It's not really the heat, but the thick air that bothers me..." The demon looked away ashamed before returning his gaze to the white beauty.

"Do you want to go out and get some fresh air then?" She smiled and lead him from the dance-floor, not awaiting an answer.

The fresh air outside streamed through their lungs, giving them a refreshing feeling. Some other elves stood outside on the balcony, chit-chatting with each other. Narwa looked around... she'd prefer being alone with Zeyir though...

"Would you like going up there?" She smiled softly, pointing at a thick branch leading upwards into the crown of the giant tree. Zeyir followed her gaze, seeing only the thick green leaves, softly lightened by the light of fireflies. "I would like talking with you..."

"Well... I... guess that'd be a good place to talk..." The throat of the demon-prince was all dry. He could feel his heart racing and his stomach switching in nervousness. Why was he so nervous?! And why did he feel like his knees were giving in at any possible second?!

Narwa just smiled, taking his hand. "You are pale...?" She stated while climbing over the railing, on the branch. Zeyir followed her nervously, passing by her, making his way up the branch.

"Well, I... uhm..." He swallowed a few times. His mouth was all dry. He bit his lips while looking from the top of the branch back to the white witch.

"I will go and find us some drinks. Why don't you go up on top in the meanwhile?" She giggled at his nervousness. She could feel it on his very aura that he was insecure about the situation. Then again she could understand his feelings very well... the whole situation was weird... for both of them. If she hadn't experienced so many times in her life already that going forward is better than remaining with old habits, she wouldn't have probably went this far...

"..." The demon only nodded, walking farther up while Narwa returned to the balcony.

"Are you Himikea?" Raven blinked nervously as she tipped on the shoulders of a green-haired figure in front of her. The woman turned her head, her long brown furred ears moving back slightly. Her hair fell in many strains, reminding the mercenary of leaves

while a black dress covered her slender body.

"Yes, indeed, I am Himikea. Pleasure to meet you." The woman smiled softly, nipping on her drink. From what Allen could see it was honey-water... The elves around her eyed the small group curiously. Nuramond felt their gazes resting on her especially, since she was holding Callo's arm, shyly.

"My name is Allen van Tirith!" The summoner decided to make the first step, offering her his hand. A grunt was heard from an elf standing next to her.

"And I am Raven. Raven Izuka!" The mercenary grinned cheerfully, giggling. She looked over to the two elves next to her.

"My name is Callo Moerbin." The desert-elf was just about to offer his hand as well, as one of the forest-elves stepped in between him and the keeper of the Cathedral of Nature. Callo grit his teeth, growling almost Zeyir-ish while sending deathglares at the interferer.

"Lord Raphel, would you mind stepping aside?" Himikea smiled, pushing the elf gently away.

"B-but, Lady Himi-"

"Aren't you a little racist here? Anyone of you?" She turned, her glass on her lips. "I am not an elf either. Is that reason for you not to welcome me here?"

"B-but he is a barbarian from the desert! He does not appreciate the beauty of nature!" The blonde man snorted almost destroying the glass of vine in his hand. As Allen looked over to his tan friend, he grew pale... He knew that face way too well... Callo couldn't hold back anymore! What a great moment for bursting out...

"I really had enough of this! Ever since I arrived in at this ball people keep telling me a barbarian, trying to find any possible reason to pick on me!" The desert-elf growled with a deep dangerous voice. "It is true that we appreciate Sol's power over Weyards', but that doesn't mean we don't honor him as well! I think we take him more seriously than anyone of you, after all-"

"Indeed, Lord Moerbin. I agree with you." Himikea caught the ex-moonguard so off-guard he totally lost track of what he was just about to say. The woman received weird glances from all watchers... Allen, Raven and Nuramond were just glad she had been able to prevent anything worse from happening...

"B...but..." Callo shook his head as if he tried to get rid of a thought.

"It must be hard living in a desert. Yet you and your race manage to survive in these rough conditions." The green haired girl leaned forward, smiling softly while taking another nip on her drink. "You must pay very close attention to your crops and farming there... I could never do that! We are living in richness here, but you manage to survive with so much less than we do... I am sure we'd be able to learn a lot from

your kind!" The surrounding elves almost dropped their glasses at Himikea's words. Callo felt his cheeks turning red. The last thing he had expected was someone defending him or his tribe here... "Anyway. You wanted to talk with me right? Why else would you know my name." She smiled, looking at Raven and Allen again. The summoner got the hint, changing the subject again.

"Yeah, right!" Allen scratched his goatee. "See, I think it'd be best if we talked somewhere else."

Zeyir sat on a branch, staring down at the thousands of lights beneath his feet. He watched the flickering fires on the streets, as nightguards crossed through town, ensuring safety in the elven capital. The sight was breath-taking... yet it reminded him so much of Galdor... He loved watching the capital from his tower at night... not that it was very light in the underworld during daytime anyway, but when the pitch-black cloak covered the houses of Galdor and only small lights shimmered through the blackness of the night, it was as if the stars had fallen from the sky, sharing their light on earth now.

"What a wonderful sight, isn't it?"

Zeyir's face grew white at the familiar voice. Shivering slightly he turned towards the source of the voice... A pair of white wings gleamed softly in the dark, while a golden spear was pointed directly on him.

"!" The demon jumped up, his eyes wide in shock.

"The trick you sued there in the forest was really nice, but did you really think you could fool us for that for long?" Marduck spun his spear a little while flying right in front of the demon-prince, not taking his eyes from him. "This time... you are all mine... And not Yarna nor your summoner-friend will come in my way."

"What?!" Zeyir blinked confused. What was that guy talking about?! Wasn't this all because of Allen?! Why was Marduck after him?!

"You escaped me as a kid... but this time you won't be that lucky, brat." The god summoned a light-ray in his hand, ready for a bloody fight.

"What's your problem with me?! What have I done to you that you are trying to kill me?! You can't tell me it is just because I'm a demon!" He snapped, summoning his flame-saber now as well... Even though it was dark, he doubted he was a match against Asgard's holy General...

"You dare asking...!? YOU DARE EVEN ASKING?!" He rushed forward, stabbing his spear right into the spot Zeyir had been just a second ago. The demon jumped backwards, landing on his feet almost cat-like. Yet, he was well aware that if he made only one false step, he was going to fall down... and that was certain death!

Marduck rushed after him, making use of his wings. Yet again they slowed him down

in his movements as he had to take care of the surrounding branches. After a sidekick, hitting Zeyir right in his legs, causing him almost to fall down, his wings got stuck between two branches. The demon-prince took advantage of the situation, slashing his claws down into the god, hitting him on his left arm.

"I will show you how I handle your kind..." Marduck hissed, taking Zeyir by his cape, throwing him away. With a gasp, Zeyir clashed at a thicker stump, feeling dizzy after it hit the head. "This is it! Justice will be served!" Marduck turned with lightning-speed, throwing his spear at the paralyzed demon.

A rush of white was seen just when Narwa stormed between them, stopping the spear with her light-magic.

"Narwa! What are you doing here?!" The god almost fell forward in shock.

"I ask you the very same, Marduck!! You are supposed to be in Asgard!" She snapped dangerously while taking out her wings.

"Step out of the way, Narwa! I will do what is necessary!" He hissed, re-summoning his spear to his hands.

"Why?!" Narwa was almost crying. "You are not used to be like that! You were always so pure and strong-spirited!" Her sapphire eyes focused the god in front of her, gleaming with desperation. "If you are going to attack, it is my duty to stop you! Please don't force me to fight you. We are friends!!"

"If you don't step aside, Narwa, I will have to forget about that fact!" Marduck growled. "This demon deserves judgment. A verdict... And the verdict for murder is death!"

"What are you talking about?!" Zeyir held his head, still feeling drowsy...

"!" Narwa suddenly stepped back, shielding the demon even more. "No!" She summoned light in her hands. "That's not right, Marduck! He didn't do a thing! I know what they did to you, but he is not responsible for the deeds of his ancestors!"

"They killed them! And I don't care which Grozen it was, but one of them has to pay! And only this one is left!" Marduck growled. "I will revenge my two sons, Narwa! No matter what!"

"You are mad!" Zeyir growled. "I have nothing to do with that!"

"That's right! That was over 200 years ago!" Narwa shouted. "He was not even alive then! You can't make him responsible for the fact a demon killed your sons! Of course it was horrible, but what you are doing is only going to spread the hatred!"

"I wonder what you'd do if someone killed Ifrit..." Marduck just stated, emotionless. "Weren't you the one telling me you'd hunt anyone down daring to hurt those you love?"

"..." The goddess looked away nervously. Zeyir was already back in fighting-stance, gritting his teeth and summoning some darkness around his fingers. Narwa's words were a mere whisper, so only Marduck could hear them... "And this is exactly why I won't let you hurt him..."

Narwa and Zeyir both dashed forward, ready to attack.

"So, you want to see the altar at the Cathedral?" Himikea smiled softly while leaning on the window.

"Exactly." Callo stated calmly. He felt much more comfortable, now that none of the forest-elves dared to say anything against his kind anymore... Even though he was not proud of what his tribe did –or more precise what it not did- he still felt linked to the desert...

"Precisely, it is necessary for us to get there. We cannot leave without visiting it before." Allen sighed. If Himikea really was the guardian of the cathedral, she'd find out about their plans anyway...

"I see. So I guess you are here because of Weyards then?" She rubbed her wrist while staring at nothing in particular. "Do you know she has been gone for a long time by now? She won't show her face to anyone anymore... It is as if her power has been sealed away."

"!!" Allen's eyes widened. Callo had said something close to this the first time they had met... He once mentioned Sol had disappeared all of a sudden as well. So it was like this for all Great Spirits? "This is, why we are here."

"I see..." The guardian sighed and looked outside the window. "... hm?" She blinked, pressing her nose against the window. "Is there... someone fighting?!"

Narwa was sent back by a light-beam, gasping in pain as her slender crushed through a couple of branches, ripping her dress. She fell unconscious from the hard hit.

"Narwa!" Zeyir gasped, grabbing her hand, pulling her up again, before she fell down the tree. "Stay with me..." He whispered out of breath while placing her between two thick branches. Marduck hesitated. He waited for Zeyir to ensure Narwa's safety... After all, his entire grudge went against the demon alone, not against his former friend...

"Are you done now? Fine, then let's end this!" He barked while spinning his spear over his head.

"Grrrr..." Zeyir held his left leg. Marduck had managed to hit him there before and it slowed him down in a way that made this whole fight pointless. He had no chance against the god!! But then again... When he was a child he had managed to get

himself out of Marduck's hands too... All he needed was a miracle...

Moving his fingers slowly over where he knew his scars were, he unsummoned his sword. His claws were the weapon of choice in this fight.

When Marduck came, Zeyir had almost no chance of dodging, preventing the pointed blade with his bare hands only.

"Dammit..." The demon growled angrily as the hilt of Marduck's spear hit him against his already wounded leg. He sank down, gasping.

"I will give you at least a few seconds to think about your corrupt kind before you die." The god said emotionless, the blade of his spear resting on the demon-prince's neck... He had finally revenged his sons... He switched his spear, hitting the hilt right into Zeyir's back.

"AAAAAAH!" The demon fell forward, hitting his claws into a close thick branch, but he didn't have the strength anymore to keep himself from falling... He was going to fall down at any second...

"..." Satisfied, the God stared down the tree, waiting for his victim to finally lose the last strength left in him...

"By our pact, I summon you! Steel! Shade!" Callo's voice echoed through the leaves, giving Marduck a chill. Suddenly, two small spirits appeared close to Zeyir. Gasping, he took his spear tightly in hand, throwing it at the demon to finish him off, but Steel shielded him.

"Shade, now!" The little creature shouted. The darkness-spirit nodded and summoned an invisible-seal, making herself, Steel and Zeyir disappear in the shadows.

"What the-!?" The god growled in frustration, just about to fly down as suddenly Raven kicked him right into the back. "You little—"

"Allen, hurry! Summon Luna! I will keep him busy!" The mercenary shouted, ripping her dress on the hip to move quicker. Nuramond joined her, breathing heavily in nervousness. Kisu sat on her shoulder and a middle Light-Spirit floated behind her.

"I call upon the Midnightqueen, the—"

"Not so fast!" Marduck spread his wings, flying over the girls' heads towards the summoner, making it impossible for him to summon anything...

"Ugh..." Zeyir hissed in pain. He was unable to hold out any longer.

"Hang on!" Callo's voice entered his ears softly, as a warm invisible hand took his own, pulling him up on the branch.

"You should really... think about your choice of words..." The demon sighed, relaxing now. They were a couple of levels beneath the others and the branch was about to break at any second... Callo needed to stay with Zeyir just in case, but he sent his spirits up to help the others.

Allen had a rather hard time as Marduck saw him as the main-threat. His agility was slowed by the branches but the god still was a tough enemy... Even with Nuramond's and Raven's help it was unlikely they managed to beat him here!

"By the power of nature, hear the voice of the forest and clear cry of trees." Himikea spread her arms from the beginning of the branch Allen and Marduck were fighting on. She had seen enough to tell who was the bad guy in this fight, and she was not going to let anyone spoil the festival! "I call upon the mighty force of nature itself, the flower of the eternal tree and the keeper of the forests!" As he heard this chant, Allen felt his heart beat with double the speed. He turned his head towards the green-haired woman, eyes widened. "I summon you! Weyards!!"

Marduck's face turned white all of a sudden. The tree seemed to move, seemed to turn alive as the branches, leaves and robes hanging on it moved towards the god, ready to attack him. And then it started... Allen felt himself sinking on his knees as Marduck was forced back by the tree, fearing for his life there. Defeated, he had no other chance but escaping.

He spread his wings and summoned a light-orb, sending it towards the sky. With all his might he sent it flying against the attacking branches, while following it out of the mess.

"Finally..." Callo made himself and Zeyir visible again, taking the wounded demon's arm over his shoulder while the branch they were on moved slowly towards the upper level where the others were.

As they finally were all together again, the tree seemed to be left by life again, returning to its previous state. Himikea shivered and sank down on her knees exhausted. A green glow surrounded her and now her hair seemed even more 'planty' than before...

"Are you okay?" Allen came running up to her, helping her up again.

"It is... okay... Calling up Weyards' might just... costs me a lot of energy..." She sighed, whipping the sweat off her forehead.

"But how did you do that?!" He watched Raven and Nuramond helping Narwa up as she slowly regained consciousness. "I thought there was... no one able here to form pacts with Great Spirits!"

"Says the one with a pact with Luna?" Himikea chuckled.

"That is... different."

"I see... So you are from the van Tirith-clan then?" She smiled softly, earning a confused gaze of the summoner. "I have a pact with Weyards because... I am a half-spirit..." She smiled and patted the dust off her dress. "Only because of that, I am able to have a close bond with her..."

"..." Allen took her on his arms, carrying her. He could feel she was too weak to walk.

"We should get away from here before someone notices what we have done..." Raven bit her lip as she helped Narwa walking over to them. She pointed at the hole in the tree nervously.

"There is a hidden stair-way at the backside of the tree." Himikea closed her eyes exhausted, relaxing in the summoner's arms.

"Then let's hurry back to the Inn. We can discuss the rest there!" Callo summoned Drop to fix at least the worst of the group's wounds before they followed the branches towards the back of the palace.