

Adtraic Verity: Journey For The Truth - Chapter 9

Ever since Asahi and Aletha awakened in that densely packed forest, there was one simple question that stuck inside their minds.

“What do we do now?” A question that projected the aura of curiosity, insecurity, and panic from them. It shows how clueless Asahi and Aletha were about the happenings of their world; an unsureness of what to do next now that they arrived.

The wanderers never had planned going this far. All they expected was that their world was still in shambles, and that they would leave immediately.

However, now that Asahi and Aletha had truly returned to their world for what they thought was only ten years; their thoughts transformed greatly.

After escaping thanks to the masked girl who saved the wanderers from their demise, Asahi and Aletha raced across the stone road leading toward the entrance of the city. Aletha warned, pointing at something.

“Bro, stop!”

Asahi raised an eyebrow, clueless on what she meant.

“What do you mean, sis?”

She pointed to the lines of carriages passing through the narrow archway. Red, Green, Blue, Brown, colors that don't typically match the hue scheme of original carriages. Her soft yet cold voice sounded.

“Traffic. I... I don't think we can get inside the city without getting caught by the guards.”

Asahi sarcastically made a fiery expression of disdain.

“Oh, YOU THINK?” His tone faded to a serious one as he saw the look of embarrassment on his sister's face. “Alright, I apologize sis. Childish of me. Anyways, I thought Brich mentioned the ceremony. Perhaps this is related to it?”

Aletha twiddle her thumbs, quivered in paranoia, and expressed with a trembling tone.

“Come on, Asahi! Be serious! T...The guards could be watching us right now. Stop slacking off, and think of something. Aren't you smart? Well... t...then think, bro!”

A first faint trace of irritation bit Asahi's face.

“Sis, you can't depend on me ALL the time. There will be a time where you will have to depend on yourself, you know.”

As he scratched his chin, thinking of methods on entering the city, Asahi saw a distraught face on Aletha. The faint sounds of metal sounded behind Asahi. Aletha tried to warn her brother, with her finger trembling in absolute fear.

“A... Asahi... b...behind you...”

He slowly turned behind; A haunting face of horror flew in Asahi, and a massive burst of adrenaline erupted inside him. What stood in front of him was a tall figure wearing dark metallic armor, with only one moving eye attached on its helmet. It whispered as a dark tail formed behind it.

“Surrender now or face total annihilation.”

Asahi screamed.

“Sis, RUN!”

Immediately, Asahi clenched Aletha's wrist and pulled her away from the individual. The knight's blade was just a tip away from cutting Aletha in half. But fortunately enough, they fled from the knight and ran down the hill, having no choice but to go inside the city.

“Why are they after us anyways? What did we do wrong?!”

Aletha trembled.

“I don't know...”

Both were confused and afraid, pacing from one pathway to the other, viciously scanning the extremity of the height of the walls and the entrance of the city. Asahi commented as he skidded his fingers across the thick, parched surface.

“I can’t believe we escaped that. This is just unbelievable. I never knew that the height was THIS tall. It looked so small from a distance.” He turned over to his paranoid sister and asked. “Sis, could you check if there is another entrance?”

Aletha, alert and panicked; swiftly jolted from wall to wall in search of an alternative to enter the city. Despite her best efforts, not an opening was to be found except the light pollution projecting inside the walls.

Even the loud chatter and bells were heard from her ears, sparking her curiosity even greater.

“Not an entrance to be seen... sigh, how can an entire city—

“Hey!” A loud voice hollered at her from a distance.

Abruptly, Aletha’s face turned pale, hearing metal and weaponry clang from a distance. She indefinitely realized who they were.

“N...No... I thought...” She whimpered quietly.

Aletha sprinted and raced toward the ditch paved near the wall, hunching her back down and closing her eyes, hoping to not be caught. The tension of her heart sprung into action as she heard the guards pass.

“Are you kidding me? That girl was just an illusion. Dan, I thought you said there was someone here. I TOLD you there was no one AND YET you still persist. Waste of time. Seriously, when was the last time you slept?”

The guard with a red ribbon wrapped around his neck, also known as Dan; quivered and replied.

“T-Three days...”

The general of the knights backed up.

“Three days?! That’s it. Guards, return to base! It was a false alarm. For once I thought DAN would acquire general status today, but to my surprise; I guess I have been GRAVELY mistaken. Shame on you... better luck next year.”

“Oh, come on... It’s not my fault my wife is keeping me awake at night.”

The other knight chuckled and mocked.

“Ha, as if you had a wife. The only ‘wife’ you’re getting is your imagination... HAHA!”

The rest of the group started laughing. The general stomped his foot on the ground and slapped the joker knight straight in the head.

“Silence. No one needs your potty mouth too. Now, come on! Follow me or ALL FOUR OF you will be ceased from your duties.”

“Okay... okay...”

As all four guards passed by the ditch, all of which had brown armor; Aletha poked her head out to make sure that she was safe.

A flame of scarlet crept across her cheeks suddenly. Aletha thought she was wounded up with the attraction, however this was an exception.

Who Aletha saw that made her so flushed was a tall young man who stood and pry near a bush in the starry hill.

He had long lustrous midnight hair with thick eyelashes fringed above, jewel-like lavender eyes that glistened like the starry nebula in the sky, and had light creamy skin; sharing a face cute and adjacent while balancing it with manly features.

She raised an eyebrow, mumbling with pebbles of dirt sliding down her skin..

“Who... is he...?”

As the young man stood atop the hill, staring at the wall and the city, Aletha’s face puffed up and grew redder, sweat sliding down her face.

(C-Calm down, Aletha. Focus. After all, it could just be a distraction)

The man’s head slowly turned to the white-haired girl hopelessly cowering under a ditch. Instead of a face of strange proportions, this one was out of sheer shock.

In all honesty for Aletha, the young man looked stellar, matching the hues of the stars. He even wore attire that emitted the aura of cunning intellect and knowledge.

(Could that man be a God? He matches characteristics similar to my brother and I...?)”

Before the man caught eye to Aletha, she nimbly lowered her back down to the ditch and hoped for the mysterious individual to leave. Despite being at such a distance, Aletha could hear the man’s whispers clearly.

“I can’t believe Clover allowed the two to escape, did she forget what we are trying to accomplish? I could have sworn I sensed gods being here. Sigh, I guess it isn’t a surprise why I can’t trust that cheeky girl with a task as important as that”

A silence followed, with the howling breeze brushing across the sea of grass. The deep, formal-sounding voice continued as his nose twitched.

“Strange. It appears the result of my analysis indicates that a scent is lingering within these premises. That scent smells SO instinctively familiar...”

His dark hair flew with the cold evening breeze, casting his silhouette atop a hill.

The mysterious dark-haired man quickly jolted down the hill and through the bushes; yet as he approached the ditch, his sight of Aletha was nowhere to be seen.

The man clenched his fists angrily and gritted his teeth, his pale face projecting a look of pure frustration.

Before he could even think of giving up, the mysterious man tilted to his right and saw Aletha running away from the wall toward the archway; possibly to inform her brother on what she found.

As the dark-haired man sighed and walked slowly back to the archway, he collected magical energy and slaughtered three knights with strange magic.

He turned back to the starry sky and whispered with a look of awe beaming on his face.

“Yes, she IS the deity that I guessed. That young girl with white hair... is...—

“STOP RIGHT THERE!”

His words were immediately cut off as he saw four more guards charging at him full speed.

“How unfortunate of you to interrupt me...”

The man’s hands engulfed into a blue luminance, his lavender eyes glowed, and his feet kicked off into the air.

Even though Aletha had no memories of meeting this mysterious man in all her life, strangely, he had familiarity with her presence; as if he met her before.

While the guards wept in pain as they disintegrate into thin air, the young dark-haired man stepped forward and closed his eyes.

“If those are truly the original gods that returned to this world, I can’t simply allow them to tread through a dangerous place such as this city. I don’t have a choice. If Clover can’t catch them, then I have to do it. Perhaps her brother is there as well?”

Racing and scampering his dark boots along the ground, he caught up to the girl finally with just several meters apart. Just as he could approach closer, the mysterious man hurriedly backed away from the girl’s sight and examined.

“I can’t– I can’t approach the siblings so suddenly. They might identify me as those so-called ‘stalkers’ by me doing that...”

He squinted his eyes at the wanderers, his eyebrows raised, and he gasped suddenly.

“That’s peculiar... I can’t sense anything linking within their aura regarding a magical power. Could it be that they have lost their powers? Or perhaps, those two are mimics? No, that’s false. Mimics aren’t that intelligent. They are powerless... and now wanted from the Queen...”

He scratched his chin, and his voice shifted to a deeper, serious tone.

“If that’s the case, then it’s a given that I need to make extra precautions to ensure the safety of those two. I can’t ignore it. I must find out who those two are... even if it costs ALL of my power.”

* * * * *

(Okay, so what would be the first thing I would do if I were to be granted the privilege to wander the entire city...? Where would be a good place to hide?)

Bookshelves stretched from the dark mocha wooden ceiling down to the floor all of which displayed and separated in five distinct rows. The building was at the height of two stories, with a desk at the side, a small window on the left wall, and a massive sliding ladder to collect books.

The front door jingled followed by erupting noise and chatter from the people and the sound of a disbelieved girl.

“Really, Asahi? Out of all the buildings we could go to, you chose the lib.rary...? I knew you were a dork. No one in their right minds would choose a place such as...

“Can I help you?”

Asahi and Aletha turned to the desk and saw a tall woman with long magenta/pink hair stamping what looked like books. Aletha, being so stubborn as she was, continued her rant while doing swift gestures.

“We could have gone to a restaurant, a tavern, or maybe the church. And what you chose was the most BORING place imaginable. A lib.rary.”

A flood of pride rose in Asahi. He knew well that choosing the lib.rary was one of the most optimum choices he made. Little did that dim-witted, yet pretty girl know... that...

Asahi expressed with a certain implication of confidence and wit.

“Unlike your creative yet stubborn self, I actually made an intellectual choice. A lib.rary contains a vast amount of knowledge spanning from fiction, history, to non-fiction.”

Aletha fell silent, nervously biting her lip in anxiousness.

“...”

While the silence of the lib.rary continued, Asahi stepped forward and added.

“Have you ever thought about that? Right here, right now, we can harbor all the knowledge and information of our world’s expansive history just by reading

books. Everything that happened throughout those years can be given just by reading.”

Aletha sighed and gave a laugh of jovial significance. She wasn't invested nor paid attention at all to what her brother was explaining.

“Blah, blah, blah... words are BORING! Miss, are there any books with drawings? I understand them more than those lengthy, chunky, sloppy, fat, blocky walls of blah blah, ga.ssy text.”

Asahi raised an eyebrow.

(That's an.... Interesting way to insult words.)

He hastily shook his head and sighed, unable to put up with this pointless argument any longer. Even the Lib.rarian was half-amused.

“Sis, they're not walls of text if you put your mind into it. I KNOW that you have a creative mind, you draw stuff literally half of your life.” He pointed to Aletha's pocket on her dress.

“I bet you still have that drawing notebook our parents gave us. Now do the same thing. Just read a fictional novel and use your mind, just like imagining. That's what books are. Education is the most powerful weapon you can use!”

Aletha's face grew red with frustration. Though she acted kind and nice for a few moments, the moment she heard her brother ramble on and on about this stuff, she went ballistic.

“Shut up, bro! I get it, blah blah blah blah blah! Get on with it! Read those walls of text. Or grab that magical notebook you always write in or something. I'M LEAVING!”

Asahi commented in his mind.

(Oh, right. I forgot I have that...)

He hastily shook his head and stomped on the floor.

“Wait a minute... NO!”

Just as Aletha could touch the door handle, Asahi stopped her with his words alone.

“Hey, sis! The guards are right outside you know.”

Aletha’s face twitched with annoyance, steaming with fury.

“...”

“If you want to get captured, then GO right ahead! I’ll be safe here, cheering that Queen or whoever the world she is to capture you. I don’t care! Go! GO, buffoon!”

He fumed and pointed to the lib.rary’s front door.

“The door’s right there! Go and show the world how ignorant you TRULY are! I hope you wither and die in that cell too....”

. . .

A silence crept inside the lib.rary.

Aletha’s crystal gray eyes started to well and water up, feeling as if her heart had been attacked from her brother. Asahi’s anger-filled face slowly drooped up to a worried, and guilty one, seeing his sister start to cry in front of him and the Lib.rarian for hurting her feelings.

“Oh... no no no, d-don’t cry... I didn’t mean to say that...”

Tears poured down Aletha’s eyes, crying as if she was a young child. The Lib.rarian sneered at Asahi and crossed her arms.

Asahi repeatedly looked back and forth, anxious that others might be watching. A few stared at her from the window, showing a look of absolute shame for Asahi. He could hear the muffled voices .

“Wow... look at that. That dweeb made that poor girl cry...”

“Shame on him...”

“Come on, let’s leave and let that dork suffer the consequences.”

Asahi’s eyes broadened. He grew panicked, trying to cheer his sister up before people started to barge into the lib.rary. He knew that he had messed up.

“No, please... I’m sorry. I didn’t mean that–“

Aletha backed away and continued to weep. Her sobs weren’t as loud as a baby, yet it felt to Asahi as if he had irritated an innocent child.

He forgot that his sister’s mind was less mature than his.

Asahi mumbled, guilty in his mind

(I feel like that I’m the stupid one for even choosing to do that... please, it was a mistake...)

Asahi stood there, paralyzed, seeing his sister cry for his mistake. He saw Aletha’s face grow blue and teary, forcing Asahi’s guilt to expand even further.

Aletha quivered and turned her head to the floor in disbelief, mumbling whilst the Lib.rarian witnessed in the background.

“I... can’t believe you. Brother, I thought you knew that I was sensitive. I... I thought you knew that my mind was a lot more immature than yours. I can’t control it, a...and yet you still do it? W...Why bro, why would you say something like that?!”

“...i...it’s because...”

The heavy weight of guilt grew upon him, he couldn’t truly come up with an excuse. Aletha shook her head and cried.

“Y...Y...You never acted this way until now! Mother would have been very angry if you were to act like this i...in front of her.”

The moment Aletha brought up the term ‘mother’, realization erupted inside every corner of Asahi’s mind.

“Our... mother...?”

Asahi was so riled up in the argument and the adventure, that he almost forgot about why his sister and him returned in the first place.

That whisper he gave secretly to Aletha when they discovered that their parents were gone emerged back inside his mind.

:: “We... lost... our parents...” ::

Memories of their mother; both dead and alive, flickered inside Asahi's mind. Yet, despite remembering her tantalizing voice, all the memories of their parents were nothing but a blur to him.

It made his heart ache and pound from guilt even further, thinking and pushing himself to believe that it was HIS fault. While Aletha hunched down, trying to stop her tears, Asahi thought of the only way he could stop this.

Aletha's heart skipped a beat, Asahi's arms wrapped around her back, whispering with a single real tear falling down his eyes.

"I'm so... so... sorry. Please i...it wasn't my fault."

In their embrace, the world stopped still.

There was no time, wind, rain, noise, anything that could disrupt it.

Asahi's embrace harnessed a power so strong that not even the strongest could fight it. Aletha could feel the warmth in both their souls heat up as Asahi mumbled behind Aletha's back.

"Forgive me, Aletha. I was thinking too carelessly. I know mother would be ashamed if she saw me right now, even father too..."

He strengthened his warm embrace.

"I love you so much, sis. You're the only one left in our family, I would never say that to you. Please, forgive me... I know that we lost our world, our family, but with you, the family is still here."

The fabricated world around the siblings transformed to an imagined starry space, with sparkles of white flashing and flying across them.

"I believe... that they're still out there. Somewhere. Mother, Father, Aiyana... they have to be. We knew that they were strong, they couldn't have lost their lives so easily..."

He shook his head, noticing he was rambling on again.

"T... That's not the point. I'm getting sidetracked. All that I mean is that I still care for you. If you were in a deadly situation, I would jump out and protect you, because... that's what siblings are for. To protect each other, and care for one and another."

Aletha's tears started to vanish and so did the imagined starry sky. She sniffled and gave a brooding pure smile...

"I... love you too, bro. I...I'm sorry... It's all my fault."

"No... it's not your fault; It's my fault. I wish I had considered it before I spoke."

"No no no, I was... too childish. I shouldn't have fumed like that. J-Just... Please accept my forgiveness, okay. I forgive you..." A glistening tear formed in her baby gray eyes. "Thank you for that, Asahi. This is all I would ever want from you. To care..."

Asahi backed away slowly, seeing the imagined starry sky fade back to the library.

"Really...?"

Aletha slowly nodded and gave a bright, wistful smile.

"Yeah... if you truly mean it, then I will stand by your side, and protect you as you would for me. As siblings should..."

Whilst the Librarian tried to shut the door, Aletha patted Asahi's back and whispered.

"...one-hundred percent of the time, bro."