

A Glitched 201

Chapter 201 The Goblin Army Threat

Apparently, without previously telling us, our parents decided to move the entire Amazon tribe completely elsewhere. Actually, just outside of the entire forest! Why? Just because of the goblins?

Can't they defeat the goblins already? They're heroes that defeated the Demon King, I would had assumed they could do as much...

"Why are we moving out? T-This is the forest we have always lived in..." said Aquarina. She was attached to this place more than I was. She was born in here after all, and had been living surrounded by this beautiful nature for all her years.

"It is complicated, but there is something more dangerous than we thought..." said my father.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Hmm... Well, probably another Demon lord." said my mother.

"Eh? A-Another? Can't they just give us a break?" I asked.

"Every Demon Lord moves independently after the Demon King was killed. They have their own plans and schemes about how to grow stronger and take over the continent, some are moved by their grudges of the past and want to kill us... However, this one... or these ones might not be driven by this motive. If they had, they would had attacked us long ago." Said Shade.

"Indeed. These guys are after another thing, but they'll probably try to take down the entire tribe because we are in the way anyways..." said Nepheline.

"W-What? What are in the way for?" asked Aquarina.

"Something... ruins... there is something there they want." Said my father.

"It is not something children would understand well, let's say there is just a bit orb there with a lot of magic power they really want to become stronger and probably take back the Demon Continent from human forces." Said my mother.

An orb? So there are ruins below our foot and there is some sort of artifact or treasure with such an incredible amount of power that it could enhance even the already ridiculously strong Demon Lords to completely new levels? I didn't knew this...

Wait, so... the heroes, Nepheline and Shade have been staying here not only for the Amazon Tribe that is the tribe of Nepheline, but also because of having to protect these ruins...? Is this it?

"Then... What are these ruins? Form some civilization of the past?" I asked.

"The gods..." said Shade.

"G-Gods?!" asked Aquarina.

"Yes, the gods themselves." Said Nepheline.

"Remember how we told you that the Cloudia Continent is also a creation of the Gods?" asked my father. "Well, in the Era of the Gods, when they inhabited the surface before the first Demon King was born... they had made many cities, their ruins were quickly taken over by nature over the eons, and there are many of these ruins, sometimes holding incredible artifacts that could cause great catastrophe."

"I-Is that so...?" I asked in disbelief.

"Yes, it is our duty as Heroes to protect these artifacts from not being taken by the Demons, we are not the Heralds of the Gods for nothing, dear." Said my mother. "We got a task to do even after killing the Demon King..."

So the heroes are not only tasked with saving humanity but also with keeping these stupid toys the gods left behind from falling to the wrong hands? Why are the Gods just suddenly becoming worse and worse as I know more about them? They seem to be assholes that just tell the Heroes to do anything they want to; it is as if we are their slaves or something.

And I am already enslaved by them, apparently... The new ability is nice and pretty and all of that, but it doesn't justify being treated like this at all...

"But we'll disobey the gods this time." Said my father.

"What?" asked Zack. "The heroes will disobey the gods?"

"Yes, we'll do it for all of you, so we can keep you safe from danger..." said Shade. "It was not an easy decision, but it is what I want to do, and everyone agreed..."

"But papa, if the evil demons take the orb...!" muttered Aquarina.

"I know, we got some plans regarding that, but we must prioritize the safety of the tribe as a whole first." Said Shade. "It is not something that can be discussed, Aquarina."

"I think it is fine I guess... I would also prioritize the safety of the people..." I said. "It is more important to save human lives than just some old toy with magic on it left by those irresponsible old men and hags..."

"Sylphy don't disrespect the gods." Said my mother. "They might be irresponsible, treat us like slaves sometimes, be complete uninterested assholes at times, but their priority is also the safety of humanity..."

My mother kind of agreed with me I guess, but she still was somewhat grateful about the good things they had done for the people, I suppose.

I guess everything is always in a gray area here, the gods are certainly not the best guys there are, but they're not the vilest either nor they had done anything completely evil other than trying to help the

people? But their methods are just a bit too domineering at times, like they think they own us or something...

But by trying to help the people, they're going with the gods' commands of protecting the people, so they're not really disobeying them, just prioritizing one of their commands.

"But why is this happening? Is the demon lord here summoning the goblins?" I asked. "How is that exactly happening?"

"We don't know the details, but we have not seen many clues that would say that the goblins had been staying here for long, this only means one thing..." said Shade. "Someone is using some sort of teleportation magic or summoning magic, and bringing them directly from the tribes at the demon continent..."

"That's..." I muttered.

So they're bringing goblins from the other continent constantly? Why are they even doing this? Maybe they fear our parents' strength and they're keeping themselves at a distance while they prepare, and use the goblins as a way to distract them?

Chapter 202 Conflicting Opinions

"We assume they're doing this for some very obvious reasons." Said my father. "One of them is to give us some distraction, leaving some Goblin Kings here and there, a bunch of Champions in the other place, and hundreds of Goblins spread everywhere... They keep us busy while we are protecting the tribe, so they can plan out what to do and perhaps even attempt it at some point..."

"Indeed, this is why we must move out the tribe, they're using it as a way to limit us... If we can get the tribe away from this accursed forest that has always been the center of attention for these bastards we might find a way to protect the people." Said Shade.

"To protect the people... I guess there's no other way around it?" I wondered.

"No, there isn't really anything on my mind..." sighed Shade. "I just don't want to repeat what happened some years ago, when they had done the same and many Amazon people gave up their lives... at the end... Even as heroes, we cannot protect everyone..."

Shad seemed quite depressed, he sat down as he looked into the ground. His eyes slowly devoid of any light, as they seemed filled with melancholy.

"Papa... Are you okay?" asked the little Aquarina, as she moved towards her father and hugged him.

"Yes... I am okay... I just have to know my limits..." said Shade. "I will protect you, and the rest of the tribe..."

"Papa..." said Aquarina, her eyes shone brightly as she saw her father being more expressive, he kissed her cheek and then her forehead, and hugged her tightly.

"I love you so much, my little girl..." he said. "I will do anything for you."

"P-Papa..." Aquarina felt a bit moved, even as little as she was, she could feel her father's love and devotion to her and also to the rest of the people.

Nepheline also hugged Aquarina from behind, kissing her as well.

"We'll protect the tribe, our people, alright?" she said. "This is what a true hero does, not care about some old relic... Whatever comes after that, we'll resolve it eventually."

"Mommy..." said Aquarina.

She got hugged by both of her parents at the same time, she was their reason to live, I could already tell. Aquarina looked very cute in that family moment, the entire scene melted my heart.

My mother and my father approached me and petted my head. They also kissed my cheeks.

"Sorry for dragging you around so much in these things..." said my father. "We'll make sure these demons won't touch you... We'll bring you and the rest of the people to a safer area."

"Indeed... We cannot risk the people's lives, nor yours..." said my mother. "Nor that of your sibling." My mother caressed her belly lovingly, it was still small, but I could already see that it had grown a bit bigger.

Zack who had been keeping silent for a while spoke.

"But where are we going though? And what about Ninhursag?" Asked Zack. "Does she know this plan?"

"I know."

Suddenly, the voice of Ninhursag resonated behind us, as she showed up inside the dining tent.

"Hey..." said my father. "We didn't tell you before, but we were going to tell you now..."

"Huh. I know... So you're leaving the forest behind at the end..." sighed Ninhursag. "I am staying."

"What?! No, you're not!" said my mother. "You're coming with us!"

Ninhursag seemed honestly pissed, as she glared angrily at my parents, especially my mother.

"I am not coming." She said. "This is my forest, the forest of my tribe, of my people... They all died to protect it... And I will also go down too in here, this is the grave of my people..."

"What kind of nonsense are you spitting now?!" roared Nepheline, approaching Ninhursag and glaring her down angrily, her height was ten centimeters taller than Ninhursag, so she could glare her down intermittently.

"Nonsense? This is not nonsense; it is common sense. All my people died in here, so why I wouldn't go down here as well?" she said. "All these lives lost, all the things we lost... All the other tribes, the beast folk... Everyone... After fighting so much to protect our home, now you're all backing down?! Don't you think this is just insulting all these people that gave their lives to protect the forest?"

Nepheline roared back.

"And what's your big plan, huh?!" she roared. "For everyone to just FUCKING DIE?!"

Ninhursag gritted her teeth as she looked at Nepheline angrily. It felt as if they had some sort of history together, the closeness in which they insulted one another and looked angrily, there was some grudge, some rivalry, and perhaps an old friendship.

"You..." muttered Ninhursag. "You've changed, I guess... I cannot really count on my friend. She's dead."

"What?!" roared Nepheline, almost about to grasp Ninhursag's neck, but she was suddenly stopped by Ninhursag's presence.

"Don't touch me." She said. "You don't want to do this in front of your kid, right?"

"..."

Nepheline looked at Ninhursag in frustration, as the rest of our parents tried to stop her, she seemed to want to go out into the wilderness.

"Wait, I am not letting you go, Ninhursag!" said my mother. "You're still heavily wounded, do you want to just jump and die?! What would your parents think? What would your older brother think?!"

"You never met my family! You don't know how we were! You don't know anything about the legacy of the skin changers!" roared Ninhursag. "We were protecting this forest and these ruins even before you nasty knife ears got to step into our territory!"

"Knife ear?!" roared my mother. "You dare call me with such a slur?!"

"Wow, wow, wow! Alright, please, let's calm down now! We cannot just fight between friends!" said my father. "Ninhursag! Think about this for once, please! You're just going to die, why do you want to die so much? Didn't you learned something with the kids? They need you... We need you."

Ninhursag looked at my father as she raised her eyebrows, and then she looked at us, except me, Aquarina and Zack were paralyzed by everything going on, their eyes were fearful of Ninhursag's attitude, she had changed way too much to how she was usually with everyone.

"The forest needs me more." she said, walking away.

Chapter 203 The Aftermath

Everything had crumbled apart in an instant in front of my eyes, my parents and Aquarina's parents all were planning to leave but Ninhursag appeared, she said she heard everything and then...

And then... things went badly. She started discussing with everyone, more and more intensively and louder, getting angry to the point she started to insult everyone, she even called my mother with a slur, that really hurt me more than she thought! How can she call my race of elves as "knife ears"? That's... I never thought she would say such a thing to us.

It seems she had a lot of resentment saved up, a lot of anger and also... in her eyes, I was able to see her sorrow, so much sadness... it felt as if my entire heart was melting away by just looking at her.

Why was she showing such weakness? Masking it all through insults and angered roars, but deep down, it felt as if she was slowly fragmenting into pieces, filled with hate and resentment over everything.

What had happened... It just felt unfair to all of us, but also... I feel bad for Ninhursag.

I couldn't help but pity her...

"H-How could Nin said such things?" cried Aquarina. "Why did she acted like that..."

"T-This... Ninhursag..." muttered Zack, clenching his fists.

My parents remained in silence for a bit, and so did Aquarina's parents.

The sky was already all clouded since morning, and suddenly, it began to rain.

The water began to cover the dirt outside, and the sound of the rain seemed to make things even worse, as if the world itself was showing how our emotions felt as of now.

Haven't we gotten enough mockery? Why must the sky laugh at us now?

Sigh...

Ninhursag...

I kind of understand part of how she felt. Apparently, her tribe was here to protect the jungle and also the god's artifact, it has been the entire tribe's work and duty since the moment they were brought here somehow... perhaps since they were created.

And they also all died protecting such a legacy, their entire race, until the very last one, her.

It seems that it was the same for many other tribes of humans and even beast-kin.

It was their duty to protect this place, and they never thought about leaving everything to save themselves, giving away their lives, and everything...

I guess deep down, Ninhursag might feel bad because they ended sacrificing everything for this goal which she sees as something that must be done even if we all... die.

Her thought process is certainly twisted by tragedy and how her family saw how things were. We all have different points of views of all things in the world, and we always will think differently, no matter how similar the thoughts might be, things might always be different in certain areas, we are all different, and certainly, we cannot match one another... sometimes.

And therefore... even now, I cannot completely understand some of her thoughts, and parts of he is reasoning, but there are also other parts I understand... such as sacrifice.

The sacrifice we do for a greater good, for the better of something. it might be for a person, or it might be for something, a legacy, something we must protect with our lives, something that defines our very beings.

Since she was born that she was probably told that her duty and perhaps even the reason of her life was to protect this forest, that this was her duty... the duty that she should never run away, and a duty that she would one day have to sacrifice her life for.

It is indeed painful how much I can agree with such thought process, even though now that I think about it deeply, I feel like it is certainly flawed in some areas...

I gave up my life for my beloved mother and sister so they could escape by taking down as many bandits as possible, but I did it for my family, not for the legacy of a forgotten item left by a bunch of irresponsible good-for-nothing gods.

Perhaps he knows that this item is really not worth the life of so many innocents, but deep down, she sees that it was worth the life of her family, and that might be enough to warp her perception of what's right or wrong.

She perhaps just wants to die here too, because this is where her family all perished...

She wants to fight like they did, until the very last breath, like she did against the armies of goblins...

She couldn't possibly accept that we were running away, even less when my parents and Aquarina's parents are supposed to be the heroes that saved the world from the powerful demon king... it feels like

everything was wrong, why would such brave heroes not stand at her side and fight to protect this place? Why wouldn't the brave amazon tribe, a tribe of warriors and hunters not fight at her side like all those other tribes did with her family?

Why won't they give away their last breath so they can protect this legacy, the reason of their life, their duty...? Why won't they?

Well... it is obvious, Ninhursag... It is because people is not all the same as you... everyone has different values, this tribe probably grew farther away from these other more extremist tribes that thought of their reason to live of protecting this forest.

And therefore, their values are different. Their value their children lives more, their value their mother's lives, their husbands, their wives, their grandparents, their uncles... like every living being, they want to live.

It is something very impressive and admirable to give up your life for those you love... but give it up for an ancient item that only contains enormous power? it might be dangerous, it might be many things... but... it is not worth it.

My parents and Aquarina's parents, the heroes, understood that.

They didn't wanted to prioritize these stupid things anymore, and now, they wanted to save the people instead of fulfilling the wishes of the gods.

Are they in the wrong?

...

Are they?

Chapter 204 Conflicting Thoughts

Perhaps, deep down, Ninhursag realized this as well, she realized that they were not wrong at all, that what they were doing was the devotion they had for the people of this tribe. Perhaps it was because of what they saw... perhaps because of those traumas that Shade sometimes speaks to my father about, which I sometimes heard about.

When he speaks about the bloodshed, about the lives of countless innocents being discarded for a "greater good", for all those atrocities he saw in the war... I can understand why he doesn't want to repeat them anymore.

Prioritizing to defeat a demon in expense of the life of many, or prioritize the life of the people in expense of losing an ancient artifact?

Any normal person with a heart would choose the last option, and my parents and Aquarina's parents are perhaps the most dedicated persons there are to the people of this world...

Even when Shade laments that he wasn't able to protect everyone, even when he laments all the lives of the innocents lost in war... I still think that he is an admirable person.

A hero is not made out of power, a hero is not made out of words, nor of appearances...

A hero is someone that people choose, a hero is someone that is dedicated to the people.

A hero doesn't necessarily save everyone, they can't, in fact, it is unrealistic. Even the gods cannot.

But a hero... is someone willing to do everything they can to accomplish this goal, even as insane as it sounds, and even as impossible as it is.

I slowly walked towards Shade as I smiled back at him, and hugged him.

He looked down, he seemed filled with melancholy, the words of Ninhursag hurt him more than he had ever expected, but only because his eyes could be seen, it was hard to tell.

But I was very good at reading eyes, teacher always praised me because of that.

"Don't let her words put you down, Uncle Shade... To me, you're really a hero." I said.

"S-Sylphy..." Shade looked down at me, as Aquarina slowly approached him and hugged his legs as well.

"Papa... you're doing the right thing... I don't want the people I love here to die..." she said. "You're my hero, papa..."

"A-Aquarina..."

Shade, a stoic man, a silent man that always showed an expressionless face, that often covered it with black clothes, and whose powers were based in pure and abyssal darkness, a man that has perhaps always lived in shadows, began to cry.

His eyes... his aquamarine eyes started to drop tears of sorrow, as he kneeled and hugged both of us.

"Thank you..." he cried. "And... I am sorry..."

"It is fine, papa... You're doing the right thing, I would do the same..." said Aquarina. "I like Ninhursag, she's a good person... She's just... probably just as sad... Her family... they all died protecting this place..."

"If we go away, it feels as if we were insulting her family's will to give up their lives to protect this place, right?" I asked. "I was able to easily tell..."

"Sylphy... You sometimes surprise me, you're so sharp..." said my mother as she walked to my side.

"Come on now, stop crying! It is fine, Shade! It is fine... We are here for you." Said Nepheline, as she petted her husband's shoulders and slowly helped him stand up again.

She looked at his beautiful aquamarine eyes, filled with so many regrets, so many emotional scars, and she smiled back at him, innocently and cheerfully... She was the perfect complement for this wounded and depressed man, a woman that is unwavering, and that will always be there to cheer him up.

"Everything is fine... I love you." She said. "And I am here for you, okay? We'll get through this, like we always do."

"N-Nepheline..." Shade cried, as he hugged Nepheline warmly, and Nepheline kissed his cheek and hugged him back tightly with her big arms, fitting of a warrioress that wields an enormous hammer as her main weapon.

My father and my mother walked at my side, as I saw Aquarina hug her parents, Zack slowly approached them as well, as he was tightly hugged by Nepheline, he seemed timid, but he was like their adoptive son at this point.

"Sylphy... Thanks for cheering him up." Said my mother. "I am sorry for... showing you this face of ourselves... We shouldn't really show it to a children... I feel like you're growing way too fast mentally... I wish... I wish I could had brought you a better childhood, one without problems... one without all of this..." My mother looked at me in the eyes, as her tears began to flow like rivers.

"I am sorry." She said again. "I really thought that because we were heroes... we would be able to do anything and that we would be able to raise you happily... but life... and everything else is always so hard... no matter how strong you grow... no matter... what you accomplish... at the end... it's all... so... so hard..."

"No... No... Don't cry, mother..." I said. "I am sure you're doing the best you can. I know you are... That's enough for me, really! I love you lots... You're way too pretty to cry, okay?"

"Geez... You're always saying such dumb stuff sometimes..." she sighed. "But this is why you always brings me joy in the direst of moments..."

"Sylphy... I am sorry for... not being able to protect you better..." said my father. "I am doing my best... I am working as hard as I can... I just... sometimes I can't... Even as hard as I try."

"It is fine, father... Nobody is perfect... Nobody can do everything in the world... That's why we need friends and companions at our side, so we can complement one another! Right?" I asked with a smile.

My father opened his eyes a bit... as he smiled warmly back at me.

"You're right..."

Chapter 205 The Feelings Of The Skin Changer

Ninhursag escaped the tent.

She ran away into the forest and continued running and running.

Her body glowed with bright yellow light, and she turned into a beautiful gray wolf, which continued running across the forest floor swiftly.

Wolves usually don't cry unless they got something in the eye, but Ninhursag, as someone that wasn't truly a beast, but a person, began to cry with the eyes of a fierce wolf.

Her tears mixed with the rain, as her entire fur got wet quickly.

Ninhursag's entire mind was filled with countless feelings of regret.

Of what she had said, and of what she had done just now...

She knew deep down that they were all right. She knew that the heroes were doing what heroes should truly do, prioritize the life of the people.

They were dedicated to them and preferred to abandon everything than to give up the life of so many innocent lives.

Because the duty of a hero is not given by gods, it is given by the people.

A hero will always be a hero, even without a blessing, even without the strongest magic, as long as they dedicate everything, they have to save the people of the darkness of this world.

They were dedicated to a single thing, and that was something that the gods or anyone else would never be able to make them change...

The gods? Who cares... not even Ninhursag cared about the gods.

But her family... her precious family... and the other tribes she met, all those warriors that prided themselves in their own strength, and that loved the forest and nature... that they loved life and everything on it...

That they found the most precious treasure in the nature and life of this forest... they were willingly gave away their lives for it, without even faltering for a second.

Although some died later than others, Ninhursag didn't remember a single regret in their faces, aside from their words of hope...

"Survive, Ninhursag..."

Their words were imprinted into her heart, and she had been living while trying to protect the place they called their homeland... while surviving as much as she could.

Survive...

"But what's the point of surviving so much if I will always be alone?"

Ninhursag stopped running, as she gasped for air, tired, she went back to her humanoid form, and rested below a tree, the large branches that covered the light from the sky also covered her partially from the torrential rain.

Her body covered in scars and tattoos was already soaking wet... as her tears were camouflaged in between all the water flowing through her face.

Ninhursag, deep down, had very terrible thoughts.

Very so often she thought that one day, she would finally be able to sacrifice herself so she would be able to move on and join her family, wherever they went...

Most of them believed that after death, the warriors of the forest would go to the heavens, to live with the gods, and would be able to have all the land and nature they could had ever wanted.

Those that died bravely and fought for the forest and nature would die honorably, and would go to this "heaven", a treasured plane of existence where they would all be happy and live in harmony with nature and its wonders.

Even though she believes this heaven... at some point, her loneliness began to make her question things, to grow angered at her own fate, and at the fate of everybody.

Why did they all had to die for the gods? Why did they left her all alone just to protect this place?

This forest that brought so much life and sustenance, but... even then, it was just that, a forest.

She knew about the runes, and the core that was resting in there... she knew that it was an artifact of ancient times that the demons wanted to gain power, enough power to rival the heroes and destroy humanity.

She always thought that they died for such stupid things... but there was also another cause of their death... her.

They wanted to protect her from danger, and let her survive above all else... it somehow conflicted with their original meaning, with their original duty, but it aligned at the end, because they also protected the forest in the process.

But wouldn't it had been better if she died with the protecting that very forest?

However, deep down, her family couldn't bring themselves to sacrifice them life of a young little girl like her... they wouldn't be able to bring themselves to see her little body dying as they fought...

It was something horrendous, even as religious as they were, they couldn't bring themselves to do such a thing. And ended making of Ninhursag, the "exception".

And in a way, they also left her for the future, the last Skin Changer, that would protect the forest even when all her race was gone.

She knew they did it for a duty and to protect her... But why did she got so angry with the heroes when they said they were leaving behind everything for the people?

Because... she felt as if they were insulting the resolve of her family.

Of sacrifice... a concept that emerged in living beings as they developed, sacrifice your own life for the greater good of others, for the life of your family to continue, for your descendants to continue...

Perhaps... to protect a legacy as well.

All these races that had done everything they could to protect this place and perished, all the Skin Changers, down to almost the very last one of them...

But the amazon tribe that was still rather big had decided to go against their own duty and not use their strength to sacrifice themselves for the greater good of the forest and the legacy, they were not willing to protect it...

They were not willing to honor the death of all those that did it, they decided to selfishly think about their own well beings first.

But was all that truly selfish?

Was the desire to live... selfish?

Chapter 206 Her Greatest Treasure

By itself, the desire to live has many meanings, but one of them could be said to be selfishness...

But at the end of the day, every living being wished to live, and they all wanted to survive and protect what they loved...

Ninhursag began to realize that she had said a lot of stupid things without realizing it, because she was blinded by the sadness of the loss of her family.

Even now, after so many years, this big scar keeps resurfacing, even when she was healed with the comfort and love of her friends and those children, it continues to resurface, like a curse.

A curse feed on her own sense of loneliness.

Even when she was with everyone there, she felt alone, deep down, it was very hard to feel "accompanied" even when there were people clearly at her side.

Perhaps this loneliness was engraved so deeply into her very soul after so many years, that it would never go away, a feeling of emptiness... the feeling of being the last of your kind.

It was something so painful that it always remained within her, deep down, she was waiting for the moment to die... she wanted to die.

Sometimes, Ninhursag would think, and continue thinking... what was her true purpose? What was what she had to do?

To protect this place and die?

She had nobody of her race to make a family, she couldn't have children, and she never truly connected with the amazon tribe, no matter how hard the heroes there tried to make her their friend, to make her part of their family...

They knew of her loneliness, and wanted to help her.

But it seems that she never wanted help.

She was sinking in her own self-loathing, and the only thing she truly wanted was to die.

At the very least... she wanted to die while fulfilling her duty, like her family did...

Perhaps... that would be a better way of doing it.

And that's why she got angry and that's why... she stupidly insulted all the people that ever offered her any type of friendship, of love, of care... of warmth.

Those that had even shed tears for her... those that fed her, hugged her, and told her that she was someone important to them.

At the end, she insulted those that tried to help her, and treated them like garbage for no actual reason.

She was really the worst.

"I really deserve to just die... I shouldn't even exist... The last of the Skin Changers with nobody else to even make a family... What's the point anymore..." she thought. "I've insulted the only people that ever showed me love... What do I even deserve other than... dying miserably? Like the beast I am..."

Ninhursag continued to drown in her own self-loathing, as the darkness of her heart continued to grow bigger and bigger, she fell into an endless abyss, and the only thing she thought was about bad things.

And now that she discarded the last people that could have ever helped her... she literally had nobody else. Not a single soul...

She was alone in this world.

Like she always was.

And... like she believed she was destined to be.

"Ninhursag!"

However, the voice of a little girl woke her up from her sorrow.

She looked towards the direction of the voice, finding a small half-elf girl running towards her, and many people behind her.

"W-What...?"

Ninhursag couldn't believe what she was seeing, despite covering their entire bodies in the rain, they were running towards her...

Despite all of it... despite all the things she said, the loud voice, the insults, everything... Why? Why were they coming back to her?

She made sure they wouldn't come back to her... She was sure that they would... not ever come back to her, at all, never ever... yet...

Yet...

They were here... and the voice of Sylphy, that sweet and intelligent girl resonated across the forest.

Ninhursag barely managed to stand up, feeling unwell and tired...

"No... Go away... Don't come..."

She began to slowly move away, but her entire body barely responded to her, the wounds of her body were still hurting, even though they had closed, she felt pain all over her body.

"Don't come closer... I don't deserve you..."

She continued to move away, crawling as fast as possible, but her body didn't respond to her.

But Ninhursag realized that her own body was very strong, she had withstood even greater pains before... so why? Why wasn't she able to move faster?

It was her own mind that was stopping her, her emotions, her heart... they were telling her to wait.

Deep down, she wanted to wait and receive them, she wanted to apologize...

But her pride, and perhaps the depression she had developed over the years didn't want it, it spoke through her lips, through her mouth...

"I don't want it... stop..."

She tried to make them stop, but they got closer and closer...

"Ninhursag!" said Sylphy, as she smiled adorably the moment she found her in the floor, pathetically sitting over the mud, covered in dirt and grass...

"No... Leave me..."

Ninhursag cried with tears flowing out of her eyes, as Sylphy walked at her side.

"Don't run away anymore... We are here for you, Ninhursag!"

"S-Sylphy..."

The little half-elf girl hugged Ninhursag back, tightly hugging her torso, as she helped her sit down again.

"You're our friend! Y-You're... my parents' friends... And Aquarina's parents too... And Aquarina and Zack's... Y-You don't know how much you mean to that boy... You're like his big sister- no, like his mother! You've been taking care of him all this time..." said Sylphy. "Do you know what he said when he learned this?"

"Ah..."

"He said that he was very happy to have found you..." said Sylphy. "And that he wanted to grow up with you at his side..."

"Ahhh..."

Ninhursag began to cry even more over Sylphy's shoulders.

The rest of the group already reached them, as they saw the scene in silence.

"I am sorry... I am sorry... I am stupid... I am so stupid..." cried Ninhursag.

"Yes... You are a bit stupid..." sighed Sylphy. "But we all commit mistakes... Just let us... help you."

Ninhursag looked back at everyone in silence, as they all smiled back at her.

And she... couldn't help but cry even more as she realized that she was never alone.

And that the greatest treasure in her life was... all these people.

Chapter 207 I've Always Been Watching Over You

Ninhursag looked at Sylphy's eyes as she began to cry even more now, while being hugged by the little half-elf... The other people quickly gathered around her, she felt a bit overwhelmed by how far they would go for her, and decided to trust them a bit more, and to apologize for having said such things.

"I am sorry... Allan... Faylen... Shade... Nepheline... I said hurtful things that I shouldn't had said... I know very well that you're working hard... And I ended shitting over all your efforts, as if... somehow, dying was better than escaping and surviving..." she cried. "I was just... I... Sorry..."

My mother sighed as she looked at Ninhursag while furrowing her eyebrows, she was pissed.

However, she slowly approached her and hugged her as well, and patted her back.

My mother has lived for hundreds of years, if she didn't had an enormous patience, I don't know how she had lived for so long.

At the end, it feels as if we were all children compared to her, and like children, we commit mistakes.

She petted Ninhursag's back and smiled back at her.

"It's okay, Ninhursag. I get it... I know what you've gone through..." Said my mother. "I've also felt that sometimes I just want to scream, that I sometimes want to cry... And that sometimes, even my own mind and my own rationality begins to slowly fall apart... Living for so long... Gives you that sort of feeling... And sometimes I also feel like I am lost, despite having done many things... You're not alone in this, and because of that... I want you to know that I am your friend, and I can be at your side, I can be someone you can speak to... if you ever need it."

"F-Faylen... Ahhh..." cried Ninhursag, as she hugged my mother back.

"Ugh... You're hugging me a bit too tightly... Agh..." muttered my mother, her small and fragile body was being tightly hugged by the muscular and big arms of Ninhursag, so it was obvious she was feeling a bit asphyxiated...

"I-I am sorry... I sometimes cannot calculate well my strength." Said Ninhursag, as she thanked my mother. "I am thankful for having someone like you at my side, Faylen. You're someone truly admirable."

"Aw, come on... After saying those awful things you're now praising me?" Sighed my mother while pouting. "It is working..."

"Hahah..." laughed Ninhursag. As she felt the hand of Nepheline patting her back.

"N-Nepheline... I..." she muttered.

"No, don't worry about it. You don't have to apologize to me, friend. I was too rough on ya. I shouldn't had screamed first." Said Nepheline. "Can you forgive me?"

"Eh? O-Of course..." said Ninhursag. She looked at Nepheline with a sweet smile. "We have been together since we were children... I always felt alone, even though I never truly was alone... I am... I feel stupid for just realizing that now."

Nepheline smiled as she giggled a bit.

"Yeah, you're a bit stupid sometimes. We have to admit it..." she said. "But... You're also a nice person deep down... I know you are. What you said earlier... That wasn't you, it was just your rage... I know you're not that kind of person."

Ninhursag began to cry even more than before, as the rivers of tears continued to flow from her eyes...

"N-Nephy... You know me too well..." she cried, as Nepheline held her in her chest and caressed her hair.

"There, there, Nin... Calm down now... Everything is alright, okay? No more drama." Said Nepheline.

Shade and my father, Allan, crossed their arms while nodding at the side. Ninhursag wanted to apologize to the, but they stopped her.

"Don't apologize, don't worry." Said my father. "Like Nepheline said, we know that was not you."

"Yeah." Said Shade. "Ninhursag, I know you since I moved here, it might not be as long as Nepheline knows you, but I think I've figured out that you're a good person too. I have a sharp eye for that, it is one of the abilities that my daughter inherited from me after all."

It seems that the ability that Aquarina had to discern a person's intentions were from her own father... Incredible, I thought they were unique, but Shade seems to have a version of it, although it might appear to be a weaker version, it still helps him in seeing the true nature of people as he knows them better over time, instead of Aquarina's almost instant deciphering.

"Thank you for understanding me, Shade, you're really a good friend, you're someone very nice..." cried Ninhursag. "You too, Allan... I am glad that you're also... my friends."

"Hahaha! Come on! Don't say that or you're making me blush!" Laughed my father. "Though... there is somebody else that kind of wants an explanation of why you went a bit weird there..."

Behind my father, Zack emerged, walking towards Ninhursag.

"Z-Zack!" said Ninhursag, as she ran towards him and hugged the boy.

Zack looked at Ninhursag as his eyes for the second time since I met him began to cry.

"N-Nin... Do you really meant it?" he asked. "Do you want to die that badly for the forest?"

"N-No... I... I am stupid... I am just an idiot..." she sighed, as she began to caress Zack's hair and then kissed his cheeks and forehead. "Dear... I... I just realized that I was just talking nonsense... It's just that... I have not been able to fully get over my family passing away yet... I sometimes... in the heat of the moment, end up saying stupid things... But I really... I want to live... and see you slowly grow up."

"Really?" he asked.

"Yes, really... I... It was me... You remember, right?" she asked. "I always looked over you when you were a little child that escaped into the woods because of your parents... lost..."

"So it was you... All those animals that watched over me... The food sometimes I found..." said Zack. "It was really you!"

"Yeah..." said Ninhursag. "I just couldn't bring myself to see a child suffering so much..."

Chapter 208 Zack's Past

Zack recalled the past, when he was just a small child that barely learned how to walk and talk, at the mere age of two, after the big war against the demons that had attempted to invade the jungle, his parents had died that day, and Nepheline told him the news directly, because she thought it was the right thing to do...

"Your parents... Died bravely while fighting to protect you, Zack... So... You should- Ah! Wait! Zack!"

"No... No... No!"

Zack's eyes back then were filled with sorrow and despair, as he cried while running away into the wilderness... Running further and further, and because Nepheline was weakened and filled with wounds after the fight against the demons invading the jungle, she was incapable of chasing him down, even less when she had run almost completely out of mana.

But there was something else, as Zack's emotions exploded, his mana manifested, generating green winds that helped him at running away, that helped him at escaping as fast as possible... This only ended making his chase even harder for Nepheline...

Shade and Nepheline tried to look for him, but when they finally found him, he was sleeping peacefully beneath a tree, above a bed made of leaves.

They sensed the presence of someone, as they looked at a gray wolf looking at them from behind.

"Ninhursag?" asked Nepheline. "L-Let me bring him back..."

"No... He wants some time alone." Said Ninhursag. "Leave him to me."

"What? But...!" muttered Nepheline.

"I know of his situation better than anybody..." said Ninhursag.

"..."

"Fine..." said Shade. "Take good care of him, we'll come to see him daily as well..."

"Thanks..." said Ninhursag.

"But Shade, he's a baby..." said Nepheline.

"Ninhursag... We have to trust her. She knows what's best for the boy..." sighed Shade. "Maybe what he needs is a bit of solitude in the jungles to learn to be stronger mentally... The lose of parents is something that can greatly impact a person's life... Ninhursag will protect and guide him. Let's trust her."

"Sigh... Okay..." said Nepheline, as she looked at Ninhursag.

"I trust you, so make sure to take care of the boy, okay?" asked Nepheline.

"Yes... I will..." said Ninhursag.

And every night since then, Ninhursag would sit atop the trees in the form of a owl, and watch over the boy's sleep, and in the day, she would watch him in the form of squirrels, rats, and small birds...

"Huh? What was that...?"

Zack would sometimes feel as if someone was watching over him, but he would only find different animals that simply were part of the background of a jungle.

"Ukiii!"

And sometimes, a weird, red-colored monkey would sometimes throw some fruits at him casually and then run away.

"Eh? The red monkey! He's very dumb, he always drops the fruits he carries..."

There were other times, when Zack was chased by predators of all kinds, and he would think he was a goner...

"G-Get away from me!"

"Groar!"

The giant panthers of the forest were deadly and always would try to catch easy prey... seeing a defenseless child was an easy meal for them, and every time they would see him, they would try to attack.

"WOOF!"

...Only for a mysterious gray wolf would always emerge.

The gray wolf was beautiful and had an ash gray fur that shone brightly beneath the sunlight.

SLASH!

With its sharp claws, the wolf would attack the threats and slash the enemies into pieces, sometimes eating the prey and sharing it with him, and other times mysteriously disappearing after getting done with its job.

"The Ash Wolf..."

Zack ended calling his guardian, the cool and fluffy wolf, Ash Wolf, and had become somewhat of a heroic figure for him, sometimes, the wolf would approach him and give him meat, and other times, when it would get too cold, the wolf would let the boy sleep at his side, using his fluffy fur to warm him while coiling around him.

These memories... all these memories that Zack had, all those wondrous animals he met, they were Ninhursag all along.

Since the moment he learned this, he felt an enormous feeling of gratitude towards her, alongside appreciation, and even familial love... He felt grateful, and wanted to thank her, and perhaps, on his need to have a maternal figure that wasn't somebody's mother, to ask her to become his mother.

After all... she always took care of him and cared for him, perhaps even now as he explored the wilderness, she might be observing him...

"Ninhursag... Will you stay with me?" he cried. "I-I want you to stay at my side..."

The little Zack that was often prideful and arrogant, and often also a bit of a meanie, was now showing the delicate side of a child that he still was to Ninhursag...

Ninhursag smiled warmly and motherly at him, as she hugged him.

"Of course... I should have... taken you into consideration..." she sighed. "I was stupid for not realizing I had a son I need to take care of."

"S-Son?" asked Zack, his eyes shone brightly as if they were to stars in the middle of the night sky.

"You're my son... After all, right?" she asked.

Zack's eyes continued flowing with tears as he nodded faintly and then smiled, showing his bright white teeth.

"Right... Mama..." he said.

A bond between two unrelated people that went through the same suffering... While Ninhursag had nobody that would take care of her in such years... Zack did have someone, her.

Ninhursag decided to be the figure that she lacked as she grew up more, the figure that Zack missed the most, a mother.

She wanted to see this child grow healthy, to be happy... and to not become someone like her, tormented by her depression, by her sorrow, and by her self-loathing.

She wanted to bring him happiness and love, so he would grow mentally stable and... So he could enjoy all the things she lacked.

"Let's survive together, okay? Wherever we go... We'll go together... I am not separating from you anymore." She said, as she held Zack's little hand.

"Let's go back to the village." She said.

Chapter 209 The Mysterious Man

As everyone slowly walked back to the village, Shade suddenly noticed something strange with his sharp eyes, suddenly furrowing his eyebrows and looking into the cloudy sky.

"..."

However, after realizing that there was really nothing, he moved back with the rest, and decided to not overthink it for the moment...

Of course, although there was no physical object there, there was indeed a pair of eyes watching over them.

The figure of a pale man with silver hair, wrinkles over his face, and purple-red eyes looked into a crystal ball, as if he were pondering something.

His robes were black and purple, with several eyes engraved on them made out of golden-colored threads.

He looked at the crystal orb expressionlessly...

"Hah... To think you would get to free her from her shackles in such a way... Ninhursag... You've always been a hopeless fool. A woman shackled to stupid and senseless traditions..." he said.

He began walking around the room where he was, as he moved outside, finding several green-skinned goblins, orcs, and trolls moving around, arming themselves, wielding all sorts of weapons, and more.

There were several Goblin Champions, and even Orcs and Trolls too, which were variants of Green Skins with a power comparable to champions... if not greater.

"I don't mind if you try to escape, but you're surely not going to just escape, don't you?" He sighed.

"Despite all your talk about being the heroes of the people and all of that bullshit... You're probably still going to fight somehow... I know you way too well, Allan, Shade, Nepheline, Faylen... You got kids now, but are you capable of completely ignoring the orders from your gods? I don't think so...."

The man smiled sadistically, as he looked into his old hand, gray and purple-colored energies began to gather around, as an item suddenly materialized, it looked like a compass which had a small holographic map atop of it.

Within the map, there was a small, red-colored dot, shining brightly... this was his goal, the precious item made by the gods, the relic left from the past, the Core.

"I have already grown desperate, you see..." he said. "My magic is slowly taking away my life... I require sustenance, and this core is perfect for it... Don't worry, as long as you don't come at me, I won't touch you nor your kids... For old time's sake..."

The man began to walk around the camp, slowly moving towards a large tent where a gigantic mammoth-like monster was resting at the side, while being feed large quantities of vegetation by the green skins.

"After all... The people... Those people don't have much time either..." he sighed.

He walked inside of the large tent, finding a tall, blue-skinned man, his physique was akin to that of a tall Goblin Champion, but his face was handsome like that of a young human adult, except from the two

enormous black horns spiraling upwards, and that big blue jewel in the middle of his forehead shining brightly,

The blue-skinned demon emanated a strong aura of pure darkness, making even the female green skins serving him food tremble in fear as they offered him fruits, meat, and liquor.

"Ah, my good friend... How is the world's greatest traitor doing?" asked the blue-skinned man. "You're ready to kill them now?"

"I told you I wasn't here to kill anybody. That's on your own." Said the man. "You're the one that's here for revenge, I am here for the Core, you bring the troops, and I have the means to move you here, that was the deal."

The blue-skinned demon sighed as he waved his head.

"Man, you're such a strict guy..." he sighed. "I am joking, come on... We are friends. Friends always joke between one another."

"...I don't consider myself your friend." Said the man. "But think whatever you want. I have to recognize it... your kin have an excellent ability to control green skin..."

The blue-skinned demon began to laugh, as he threw away the food they were offering to him, the female green skins screamed in fear as they moved away. The man ignored them completely as he raised a large cup with wine.

"Right?! Our kin were born to be kings! Just with a thought, I can make these women strip." He said. As all the girls suddenly began to undress themselves and stripped bare naked in front of him...

"Hahaha! See? Hmm! Such nice ass!" he said. "See? And with another thought, I can make them all dance for me, and I can also just make all those big and stupid guys outside fight to the death!"

He demon grabbed the butt of the girls around him as he moved them near him, kissing their necks and licking their faces. He was truly an aberrant being.

The man in front of him squinted his eyes, finding this man just as horrendous as he thought he would be. Anyone from this family of demons was just a sick bastard...

"You're a barbarian..." he said.

"But you need me!" said the blue demon, while smiling and offering a cup of wine to the man.

"Come, friend. Let's enjoy these young girls." He said. "I am sure you need to spend your virginity card eventually, how about doing it with some premium beauties like these? These are the prettiest girl in the entire tribe..."

"...I am not interested in your mundane pleasures." Said the man, closing his eyes. "Just remember that in a bit less than a week, we'll act. For now, I shall go to my room and do some meditation until then."

"And there he goes... What a boring man is he, isn't he?" asked the blue demon, looking back at the girls.

The man walked back to his tent, feeling disgusted with himself that he would need to cooperate with those that once were his enemies, with those he once desired to kill the most to save the world...

But at the end, he was being forced to strive from the path of righteousness...

...Because it didn't yield any results.

"I will save all of you... Don't worry... Even if I have to nasty my hands..." he thought to himself.

Chapter 210 Half A Week After

Half a week has passed since the incident with Ninhursag, and she was now getting better over time, it has been such little time but now she felt way better than before, my mother and I had been working together to give her some massages all across her body by combining our healing magic together.

I am learning some more from my mother as well, as she had taught me these massage techniques that combine both techniques with the hand and also magic together. They're very useful at relieving the pain of muscles and also the pain in the scars and more, so it is a perfect technique to use in just anybody, really.

Thanks to that, I was able to acquire a lot of knowledge about using magic, and I even found some new ways of using Agriculture, fusing the power of that Skill with massages and healing magic can literally boost the strength of someone and also heal wounds... And it also works on me! So maybe I finally got a stronger healing technique, although it might take some time to master it, and... I don't think I can do a massage in an open wound, so I need to first learn strong enough magic capable of closing a wound.

Aside from that, I've been practicing my daily blade swings like always, if I miss a single day, I feel like I am a lazy sloth, even more, I feel like I am useless! So the natural thing to do is train and train as hard as possible and to kill myself training! Yes, this is the ideal way of doing it.

Ahh... I know it is wrong, but my teacher really engraved that concept in my head, so even now that I have reincarnated, I cannot stop training, and well, I am not the only one that is training, my spirits, all of them are also training, and Furoh too! I have begun to make him spar against Pyuku, and the two are getting a bit better.

Ignatius was being forced to constantly conjure fire spells until he could memorize them, I was giving him mana slowly, so he would never run out of it, and he could constantly train his fire magic and even his fire breath. He has yet to break out of the shell, but now he learned how to use his little tail coming out of the eggshell to give some nice tail whips, and also use his feet to kick... And that's it.

Meanwhile, for Naturia, I am making her train hard too by conjuring spells constantly, she also learned how to charge at something and hit it with a lot of strength- as much strength as she can muster, which is not that much, but she's as big as a coconut, and because she's like a seed, she's covered in this hard shell and can easily hit something very hard, so maybe she would one day bonk an enemy while I am not watching or something. Although she's practicing more healing magic and plan manipulation, we also discovered she got the knack for the manipulation of soil, so she's practicing that too so she can help me conjure earth magic in the future.

And Alice? Well, she has been mostly resting, but just yesterday she suddenly somehow learned the ability to produce a very bright glow out of her body... And no, this wasn't naturally glow amplified by me or something, she literally conjured the Light Attribute Spell named "Light Flash"...

This means that she can probably conjure more light magic! Right? Perhaps she's becoming more and more like a spirit now that we made a contract, and she became my Familiar... She said that she will train diligently, and since then she had been repeatedly using Light Flash while attempting to make something else, I think I could help her conjure spells, so I might go at night inside my soul scape and attempt to teach her to conjure some of the light spells I know. Perhaps Life and even other attributes such as "Divine" might be possible for her, although we'll need to try first.

And then there is Furoh, who has been sparring with me, Pyuku, Aquarina, and Zack since the day that things with Ninhursag were finally resolved, so I am happy for that. He has been practicing his shapeshifting abilities, lately he had learned how to stretch himself at least five times his original size, and also, he can take some more hideous forms by stretching his tentacles until he looks like a mass of tentacles... I don't know how that could be useful, but he could certainly restrain someone like that!

He had also awakened Darkness Magic, and he's still on his stage of development with it, I don't know if I should ask Shade to teach him a bit more, he's the expert in this element in magic... But I don't know if Shade would want to teach a hideous-looking demon like Furoh, even though Furoh is very innocent and a nice person inside of his heart, it is not as if the other people around us had started seeing him differently... he'll have to do more stuff to earn the trust of everyone.

And moving on, Pyuku! He's growing relatively stronger as he eats other things, he knows how to use basic martial techniques for almost every weapon the goblins had ever used, and he can also conjure some spells that they knew too, which is pretty impressive, he just learns instantly from anything he eats, but he said he got a limit, I don't know if he reached it already or not though...

However, he's slowly solidifying into a stronger and better companion- oh, and he had made a familiar pact with Aquarina two days ago too, so he can't escape from us anymore...

Meanwhile, and talking about Aquarina, she had gotten better at her usage of water magic, knife techniques, and her martial arts and acrobatic techniques inherited from her father, although in a few days one cannot really improve that much, but she's doing a similar swing training than me, swinging her knives constantly while practicing slashing a tree's hard bark. She changes a lot when she gets serious in her training...

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