

## **Non Human 531**

### Chapter 531 Vim's Mistake –A Failed State

"You forget the famine of the dark winters! That would not have even happened if not for your so called god of peace!"

The senate grew rowdier as more and more stood to shout their own arguments. The hall quickly became too noisy to hear any reasonable discourse, so for a moment I just... ignored it all.

Father had been right. The greater the gift, the greater the betrayal.

Leaning back, I slumped in my seat as I continued to ignore the shouting. People in white robes were yelling at people in red ones. Some of the white-robed senators had blue markings on their backs, circles within circles.

When had those markings showed up...? Not long after the first betrayals... it hadn't taken long had it...?

Like a disease the followers of this god with no name, this God of Blue, The Blue One, had spread to such a point it was now malignantly uncontrollable. Half the senate bore the mark, and it felt lately like those who didn't still argued in their favor half the time.

"Our war is over! The gods who tormented us, are dead!"

I blinked and focused. My eyes found the source of the familiar voice. A white-robed man with tusks. Many others around him, not just in his fellow white robes but also the darker reds, sat down in respect as to hear the rest of what he had to say.

The great hall became quiet, even maybe apprehensive as the man with tusks took in a deep breath and nodded.

"Our enemies are dead. Their servants, routed. Their creations and poisons, if not eliminated at least handled and contained. We... no longer need war," he said.

For a moment the hall stayed silent, until a red-robed woman stood. She had a large belly, pregnant, and it made her look tired. "Even if one agreed that this Blue One is not our enemy... why must we care for their terms? Why must we capitulate? Have we not survived this whole time on our own? Have we not flourished? Who here is not healthier, in all manner and shape, today compared to yesterday? You claim we need not war, yet so readily claim we should kneel in fealty! One proceeds the other!" she shouted.

I'd have clapped if not for the fact none of it mattered anymore.

The man with tusks hadn't sat back down. He had heard her words, and was more than ready to respond to them. "You're allowing past grievances to cloud your judgment, dear friend. Think of your child, growing now in your belly. When they are born, would you not want them to emerge into a world of peace?" he asked her.

"Into a world where we still live under a god, after all the bloodshed and grief to avoid such a thing you mean? They will just question our wisdom, rather the lack of it," she responded.

Several people nodded, even a few in white robes, but the tusked man didn't budge. "What better peace, than one proven by honor and value? This god, this Blue One, can be the proof we truly have won. That our mountains of corpses have not been for naught! By agreeing to peace, by learning to live and let live, we can prove to not just ourselves but all to come that our actions and deeds were about more than simple genocide! Deicide! It would prove we are the better individuals! The right ones!"

Even more people nodded, which made the pregnant red-robed woman scoff. "To think one so wise as you would fall for so simple a trick. It is as Lord Vim says, even the strongest amongst us can break, given time!" she said, and then promptly sat down.

A few people glanced at me, but I ignored them. I stayed seated as well. Here on my throne of sand.

Of glass.

Of disgust.

"Our Lord of War has indeed taught us many things. The only reason we all stand here now, voted into power and representing this great nation, is thanks to his efforts and wisdom!" the man with tusks raised his voice as he pointed at me.

A piece of the stone throne I sat in chipped and broke off as I shifted a shoulder ever so slightly. No one seemed to have noticed as the man continued his speech.

"And it is in that wisdom, that I say what I do! He could rule us, like a god, yet he doesn't! He doesn't even hold the power of a single vote, opting to sit back and give us all our utter freedom! It is in this way we have proved his way is right. It is in this freedom, we have learned what is right! And I say this, as one

of freedom, the Blue One must be heard! Their words, their methods, they themselves..." the man slowed in his speech, and I nearly gagged at the way he sniffed as if about to cry. "They may be a god, but they are as true as any of us! The Blue One does not ask for fealty, or even mercy! They only ask for the same thing we all share, and have sacrificed so much for! Freedom!" he ended his speech, to a great uproar of applause as he sat back down.

Another piece of my chair broke, and although this time it had been a good fist-sized chunk, none had noticed it as it fell. Even as it loudly banged against the granite floor around me, and broke into more pieces.

The hall was loud as people clapped, and as more conversations broke out amongst them. The sounds deafened all else, and made me think of home.

Mother had sometimes made little dioramas like this. Filled with tiny little people, noisily doing whatever she was at the time trying to teach me.

It was why I had built this place the way I had. Because of one of the buildings she had shown me. Where a large group of people had debated over laws and ethics, in a huge circular open-roofed auditorium. I had of course modified it to be more... suitable, making it easy to access and even easy to use for those who were deformed or handicapped. Not many were today, but when this nation had first been founded many of those who had been senators or associated with them had been maimed. From the wars with the gods and their monarchs. So building with them in mind had always been a standard for me, and thus this nation.

Reading on this site? This novel is published elsewhere. Support the author by seeking out the original.

Maybe that was why this was happening... even though so many were old, hundreds of years old, most if not all of them had not known the true terrors of war. Their parents had, or their grandparents, but not

they themselves. A quick look around showed no one missing an arm, or legs. Pretty much all of them even had all their external traits, such as their wings or tails.

None of them comprehended the terror of a god, because they had not experienced it. They knew not a god's whims. A god's repulsive habits and tendencies.

They didn't fear it because they couldn't comprehend it. Having lived so long in peace they now couldn't see the glistening knife slowly inching towards their hearts right in front of them.

It was a cruel thought, but it made sense. Most of the gods were dead now. Gone. Merely a handful remained, and those that did were like this Blue One. They hid from me, from the world in total. Any and all battles with them have been not on a field, not with arms and bloodshed, but instead with the mind. The spoken word. They had originally used guerilla tactics, such as stealing from and destroying our train transit system, but eventually even that had stopped.

Hell, I've not even had to fight a monarch in years. They just... weren't a problem anymore.

It was such a weird problem for me to have. I should be ecstatic. Thrilled beyond belief. In a way I had succeeded. I had rid the world of the sickness that was gods. It had only taken a thousand odd years, but I had did it. Or at least, I was on the precipice of it.

At least, so I had thought.

Somewhere along the line the gods, the ones left at least, had realized they couldn't defeat me. Not on an open battlefield, at least... so they had switched tactics.

They couldn't defeat me, so they were trying to defeat those I led. My armies. My nations. My people. Those that supported me.

And they weren't doing it through violence. In fact, they weren't even doing it maliciously.

"You're basically claiming the wars are over!" someone shouted, rather angrily.

I focused on them, finding a white-robed woman. One of the younger ones. The senate hall grew quiet as others looked at her, the tone of genuine anger in her voice unmistakable.

Such anger did not belong in this hall. I usually didn't allow it. Or at least, didn't support it. And everyone knew it.

This was a place for discourse. To debate. To find a common ground. Not to rage.

Yet...

"The wars are over, child. How many years has it been since a single sword has been unsheathed? A single arrow loosed? A spear thrown?" A red-robed man asked.

The white-robed woman pointed at me. "Then are you saying we no longer need Lord Vim?" she asked him back.

The hall suddenly got very quiet.

I blinked at the sudden suggestion, and even though it was a shock to hear it... I still felt my shoulders relax a little, as if suddenly a great burden was finally off my shoulders.

Had... had I been waiting for this?

"You... You can't say that!" another red-robed woman stood, her voice cracking as she shouted.

"Yeah! How could you say that!" Another red-robed senator stood.

"Is she wrong!?" A white-robe shouted back, and soon dozens of people were standing and shouting over one another, each trying to be heard.

Quickly the hall erupted, becoming far louder and chaotic than any time before. For a tiny moment I tried to follow the shouting, to see who and what were debating and being debated... but... there was no point.

Even if this vote went my way, and they voted to not ally themselves with this Blue One, it didn't matter. The seeds have been planted. A large enough portion of the nation, of this society, were hearing that

god's words and finding them worth listening to. If not today, it'd be tomorrow. If not tomorrow, a year hence. A decade. A century. It didn't matter, the end result would be the same.

They'd choose the god over me. Over themselves, even.

Maybe it was just... something ingrained in one with a conscious...? Maybe deep down, any and all people, really longed for the feeling of servience? What if it was instinctual? To worship, to serve something one considered a higher power? Maybe my attempts all this time had been for naught, and going against the natural order myself.

Mother would have liked such a conundrum.

"Trade one god for another is foolish! Especially one who doesn't demand worship!"

A piece of the chair I sat in cracked, as I realized what had just been shouted. My jaw clenched as something I'd not heard in years had been spoken aloud.

Right... that was how so many of them saw me, wasn't it? Even if none said it to my face, or even whispered it at a distance.

To them I was as much a god as those we hunted. Just one who was merciful. Kind. Humble, maybe.

Which might be part of the reason they were willing to hear the Blue One's words...

My focus dulled as I realized this little experiment was over.

Slowly standing from the Throne of War, I found myself smiling softly at the fact no one noticed. Not a single senator, or any of their servants or guards, gave me even a single glance as I simply stepped away.

Heading for the exit, I decided it was time. This had been a long time coming, but it had been expected.

Ah well.

Father had been right.

As he had said, even in front of mother; no matter how many times you save them... they'll just run straight back into the fire. Like headless sheep. And even if you doused the fire, they'd just relight it.

So be it.

They don't need me anymore. Their nations are stable. Their understanding of science firm. Their grasp of ethics and laws not just ingrained into them, but backed up by hundreds of years of societal proof. They have been running their own nation for centuries. They fed themselves. They defended themselves. They wrote their own laws, dealt with their own political neighbors, fought their own wars of normalcy...

They would be fine without me. After all, this had been temporary. A measure I had only done to hasten the fall of the gods. To fulfill my task, I had gathered them. Taught them. Raised them to what they are, so they could do more than just be fodder on a battlefield. And now...?

Now they weren't helping that task.

Never needed them anyway.

Chapter 532 A Monarch's Begging

Snake monarchs were rare. Only a few gods had made any, and surprisingly their bloodlines ended abruptly. They were one of the few types that seemed to always give birth to non-human vessels, and rarely if never giving birth to another monarch. My assumption for the reasoning of this was the eggs. As odd as it sounded, since you'd think a method of birth a step beyond mammalian, it made sense to me. It felt like to me most monarchs that used eggs as a birthing method always birthed more humanoid creatures than not.

Which was why my finding this one with its brood of monarch children was as shocking as it were.

Holding open the thing's giant maw, I closed my eyes as its tongue lashed out at me. It was razor sharp, and it coiled and slapped around my face and head. I felt the tiny little knife-like edges of the tongue slice and dice into me with as much ease as it would a stick of butter.

It hurt, and then it stung as its venomous saliva got into the fresh wounds.

My left eye got sliced open, and I flinched just enough from the pain to make a mistake. My left arm buckled, and within half a heartbeat the snake had taken the opportunity with joy. I felt massive teeth sink into my sides as the jaw snapped closed, and then I was violently shaken every which way as it crushed me.

Bones broke. Flesh was torn. The thing's venom stung, and I even felt it getting pumped into my sides from its fangs. The shaking was so wild I had no sense of up and down, and then before I knew it I was weightless.

I heard my own voice say something, but wasn't sure what had been said. Before I could remember, my world went quiet.

And stayed quiet for an unknown amount of time.

Then I opened my eyes.

Coughing, I groaned at the heavy body attached to my head. It felt solid, unmovable, as if I'd become stone. Could I even move a finger or a toe...? Didn't feel like it.

I wonder if my back had broken, or if this was the thing's venom paralyzing me...

Slobbering as I coughed some more, I heard distant trees break and crack. The snake was either running away with haste, or was charging at me. I couldn't really tell. I could feel the heavy movement beneath me, but I was still dizzy. Disorientated.

By my parents this thing was tough. And its venom was actually working on me, which was just fascinating. For it to be so potent on me, where even gods themselves failed to do so with similar abilities, was telling. It was too bad I couldn't capture it and stockpile its venom. I bet it'd be very potent against other monarchs. Who had made this thing? I wonder if I've killed them yet or not.

Hope I had, because if their monarch was this tough I really didn't want to know how strong they were...

Some movement returned to my left arm. The one that had buckled and broken. It had broken first, so had healed first. I got it over my heavy feeling body and with a clenched fist hit the ground near me. I pushed off the ground, and regretted doing it. My whole body was numb, so all I had done was push me over onto my back.

Groaning, I took in a deep breath and wondered if this was going to be a real drawn out process. I still heard thrashing nearby, trees breaking and whatnot. I wonder what it was doing. Usually by now they either ran off or continued to attack me.

How long had it been since it had tossed me away...? Had to have been longer than not, since I think I had blacked out there for a moment...

Some more feeling returned, and I got my left leg to shift in the grass. As it slowly stopped being numb I felt the pain that followed. A bone was broken, and sticking out of my shin. I could feel it wiggling out of the hole as it healed and repaired itself now.

Just great. This was why I needed help. I was basically immortal, but it wasn't like I was perfect. I needed people to distract them, to give me time to heal or just outright attack without being targeted...

"My fault..." I groaned through clenched teeth. I was alone now, by my own doing.

I had abandoned my armies. My nations.

Abandoned them before they had a chance to abandon me.

The thought of all those who had once served me, their faces and names, made me grow hot. Angry. Spiteful.

Which only made me even angrier, because I hated those feelings.

I was hating people who had made a choice. Who had utilized the free-will I had granted them. Given them through great effort, and even greater sacrifice.

They had that right. And for me to hate them for it just made me a hypocrite. A sickening and...

"Get up mommy!"

My eyes flinched at the shout. My heart, healing from toxins, thumped in a weird way at the sound of a child's cry.

A loud hiss followed, and I recognized the sound of it. That was a hiss of utter agony. Of pain.

Had... had I hurt her? Before she had tossed me aside? I must have. That explained the thrashing sounds. She was injured. And maybe even badly, based off the child's cry... That meant the monarch was weakened. It was debilitated. Perfectly ready for me to get up and finish the job.

Odds are I'd heal faster. I was already getting control over my limbs back. I'd only need a handful of minutes before I was able to get back on my feet, and would be able to walk over there and finish the job.

But instead of being happy over such a thing, I found myself feeling something different.

Something wrong.

"Get it together, Vim," I growled at myself, but not because I was allowing an opportunity to pass me by.

"Mommy!" another child-like voice cried out. One with a slightly higher tone. A different child.

I spat at myself as I rolled to my knees and hands. I was nearly ready to get back up. Not fully healed, and still afflicted by the venom, but not enough to cripple me no longer.

Get up Vim. Stop feeling for them.

They were children. But they were monarchs.

They were your enemies.

"Runnnss!" a louder, deeper, voice hissed. The monarch. The mother.

She sounded as broken as I felt.

Little hissing cries came, and I clenched my eyes since I recognized the sounds. Knew them well.

I didn't need to see them. I didn't need to stand up. I knew what I'd find just beyond the trees.

A mother surrounded by her children, weeping as she begged them to flee. To abandon her and survive.

Taken from Royal Road, this narrative should be reported if found on Amazon.

And they, like all children, wouldn't do it.

"Get up!" I shouted at myself angrily, since I knew I could. I could feel it.

I was healed. Yet I still hadn't stood.

Because deep down I didn't want to.

Still, I stood.

No pity, Vim. You know what pity brings. Held the carcasses of those who suffered from such a disgusting mistake. Burnt entire cities of corpses that always followed moments of weakness.

Coughing up some weird tasting bile, I blamed it on the venom... but knew it wasn't.

I sickened myself, sometimes.

On wobbly legs I stepped forward... and struggled up a small hill, pushing aside bushes and small trees as I headed for the sounds. The hissing drew me forward, to a small clearing.

Or well, a newly made one. The huge white snake had curled up in a ball, and the sounds of the earlier thrashing became clear. She had knocked over all the trees around her, and was now coiling around herself as if in great pain.

What had I done... I wonder? I had been broken. She had me in her maw, and I had been the one getting hurt I had thought? Had I broke something during the thrashing?

"Mommy...!" one of the smaller snakes noticed me. They were tiny little things when compared to their mother, but still as big as me. They all had the same white scales and red eyes and tongue. In all truth they looked beautiful, especially here in a world of green and brown.

They should go to the north. Though thanks to their size, and being monarchs, they likely didn't struggle to hunt or protect themselves... their white scales would fare far better in the snow covered lands than these wet grasslands here.

"Wait...!" the mother coughed a word, but I couldn't see her face or head. It was somewhere in the middle of her coiled up body.

And a big body it was. Even coiled up as she was, she was still bigger than even Miss Beak. She wasn't the biggest monarch I'd ever seen, but she was up there. I wonder how long she was from head to tail, a part of me wanted to say she was easily a thousand feet or more.

"Stay back!" one of the smaller snakes reared up upon my approach. It hissed, but looked like it was half a moment from darting away in fear.

I ignored its warning as I glanced around at the other children. There were five of them, as far as I knew, and all but two of them were on the mother's body. A few looked like they were trying to squirm their way into the coiling mass, but the mother had curled up too tightly for them to do so.

"Runs, childrens!" the mother roared from within her coil. The children all flinched and looked at her, but not a one moved.

Really... what had I done? She sounded hurt. Really hurt. But I didn't see any obvious wounds upon her massive body.

This was going to be difficult. The thing's scales were some of the strongest I'd ever dealt with. Too strong for me to get through with just my body. I should have brought my spear.

Her heart was in her head. Between her eyes. It was why I had been willing to risk stepping foot into her mouth. I had planned to dig at it from within. That hadn't been the smartest move on my part, I guess...

"Stop!"

The one who had reared up charged forward. The snake was longer than me, but thin. Thinner than even my waist. But I knew better than to discount its speed or strength, what with it still being a monarch.

I held my ground as it slithered straight at me. It shot out to bite me once near enough, but I just backhanded the thing before it could.

The blow had been hard, but I knew it'd not kill it. Unlike its mother the thing's heart was in the center of its body. The other snakes cried out in shocked hisses as their sibling fell to the ground nearby, rolling away and going still.

Glancing at the snake I'd just smacked away, I wondered if maybe I had killed it. It wasn't moving anymore.

"Stop!"

I returned my full focus to the mother as it finally revealed its head.

One lopsided, with the left half of its lower jaw dangling down lifelessly.

Ah. I had broken half its head somehow. Maybe I had kicked or something as it had tried to chew on me?

No matter. Its head was revealed now. And with that broken jaw it'd not be able to stop me from clawing its heart out, even if I had to do it piece by piece.

"Please! Wait!" It shouted at me as I stepped forward.

"Mommy!" the smaller snakes cried out, slithering up her body and onto her now that she had an opening to do so. I watched as they all hurried into the mother's coil, disappearing into the mass as if for safety.

The monarch looked down, and nearly missed a step as I saw utter fear on her face.

Even as a snake, a giant one, you could see the motherly love. It was so obvious it hurt.

It hurt almost enough to stop me.

Almost.

"No..." I whispered as I steeled myself. This was not the first time I'd have to kill a monarch while their children cried out. I've done it before. I'll likely one day have to do it again.

"Wait...! Wait!" The monarch's broken jaw didn't stop it from speaking as I neared, as it started to curl up into a coil once more. Not to protect its head though, but instead the children now hidden within her wrap.

"I think not," I said.

"The Blue One...!"

I stopped just a few feet from her.

A glob of saliva fell from its broken mouth as it breathed in, sounding almost like an inverted hiss, and it shivered. "The Blue One..." the monarch said again, sounding defeated as it did. The thing's huge head lowered and slumped, and I watched as its whole body that had been curled up tightly went limp.

It had just given up.

"What about them?" I asked, apprehensive.

This was the first time a monarch had ever brought them up before. Was this one of their creations...?

Instead of answering me the monarch began to cry. It started to tremble as it wept, sounding a little silly as it did thanks to its broken jaw.

"I'm so sorry..." it hissed.

"You're going to be if you don't explain!" I shouted as I stepped closer.

The huge head simply nodded, and I heard the little snakes within her coil cry out. I ignored them as the great monarch took in a deep breath.

"Spare them. I beg you," the monarch then said.

My whole body went cold as I bit back a quick response. Spare them! As if I was the monster and not they!?

"Mommy...!"

I flinched and turned, and found the snake I had smacked earlier had woke back up. They were still on the ground, trying to slither back towards their mother. They did so weakly, and in a way that told me I had likely maimed it.

"Please...! Spare them! My god is dead... our orders no more. They don't... they..." the mother snake started speaking quickly, likely panicking because I had turned and focused on her child.

I ignored it as it wiggled past me, heading for its mother. The thing didn't even have enough strength to climb up its mother and into safety.

"You better start talking. Fast," I threatened it as it lifted a part of its body, to give the broken young snake a way to slither into its embrace.

"First your word, Godsayer. Your word," she said.

My word...?

I shifted as I considered what it was asking of me.

To spare its children. In return for... what?

"What do I get for agreeing?" I asked.

"I'll tell you... no! I'll take you. To her. To the Blue One," the snake offered.

I rolled a shoulder, only to keep myself from outright agreeing without hesitation. I nearly had.

This snake knew where the Blue One was...? "You said I've already killed your creator?" I asked it.

The snake nodded so quickly its broken jaw made weird sounds as it dangled wildly from the movement.

"And... you'll show me where they are," I verified.

"Yes. If you spare them. Please. They've done nothing, Godslayer. No crime. No sin. Spare eating small birds and rats," she said.

I didn't doubt that. But that would change. Eventually.

Monarchs of their size, of their intelligence and strength, couldn't hide from the world for long. Even if they vowed, and did all they could to fulfill that vow, to never harm people in any way... it would not matter. Eventually they'll be seen. Rumors will spread. Then the curious will search them out. And they'll be forced to kill to defend themselves. Then after enough hunters were slain, armies would be gathered to hunt the beasts in the forests. And pretty much no army in today's era could slay these things without countless sacrifices.

And that is to say the least that they don't eventually grow a liking to the flesh of people, or their cries as they were killed. Many did.

But...

Staring up at the monarch, I wondered if its venom was still bothering me. It shouldn't be, but I still felt... dizzy. Weak, even.

"To never harm, kill or eat a non-human or human, unless your lives depend on it. Can you agree to that...?" I asked.

"Yesss..."

Taking a deep breath, I shivered as I prayed I wasn't making a mistake... as I nodded.

"Then take me to her."

Chapter 533 Hidden Secrets

The floating rock hummed a little, as if buzzing with electrical current.

It wasn't. The hum was just the magical stone inside of it, empowered and enchanted by one of the gods long ago. Eventually it, like many of the others, would run out of power and fall to the ground. This one though was unique, since it was not alone.

Hundreds of similar sized boulders were all around me. All of them were floating lifelessly in the air, hundreds if not thousands of feet above the ground. Some of them even had trees and grass on them, where little white birds seemed to flock to.

The one I stood on had no such life upon it. It was just a giant rock of stone and clay. But it didn't matter.

Beneath me, hundreds of feet below, was a massive forest. One that was damp, with a mild hazy mist covering it. The dark green trees went on for as far as the eye could see, with the occasional mountain here and there.

This place was far from the nations I had built. Thousands of miles from them, in fact. But I knew better than to think that mattered. If a god was here, and if this god had indeed been the one communicating and interfering with my nation... they had many methods to render that great distance away into not even a second thought.

A heavy wing-beat drew my eyes upward, away from the giant dense forest beneath me. I watched Miss Beak land next to me, causing the stone to wobble a little thanks to her weight.

"I can't see it, Vim... but yes. I feel it. There's some kind of rift, a fracture, all over this forest. Like a giant shield, or barrier, over the whole area," she said as she lowered and turned her huge beak to look at me.

I nodded slowly as I returned my gaze down to the forest below.

I too could feel it. Distantly. It was a similar feeling to what this rock gave off. As if I were to reach out with a finger and touch the forest, I'd be shocked by static.

But the problem I had was... I felt such a thing all over the place. All over the world. Although many of the gods spells and abilities have faded, enough still remained to make me feel their presence all over the place. Like these stones floating aimlessly in the sky.

Me feeling a little bit of divinity wasn't enough. Not enough to verify I hadn't been led astray. Not enough to pinpoint the god's exact location...

"Just how are they hiding themselves...?" I wondered. Gods have always tried to hide from me. They had plenty of methods, and have thought of some very unique techniques over the wars... but this? This wasn't just some ploy or illusion.

If they really were here, as I assumed they were, then they had figured out how to completely shield their divinity from me. Which meant if they could do it...

"There's a reason for this, Vim."

I turned my head to look up at my friend. "Of course there is. And it will be as stupid as all the rest. So there's no point in caring for it," I said.

The giant flamingo tilted her head at me. "Where's the wisdom in that?" she asked.

"I'll not hear this from you too, Miss Beak. I hear it enough from those idiots," I said.

"Idiots. People you've trained and raised. Taught and nurtured, to be better and smarter than any others alive today. Surely, they couldn't speak a word of promise even if forced to, I'm sure," she said with a huff.

I sighed as I shook my head at her. "For one who wanted nothing to do with the nation I built, you sure do have a lot to say about my leaving it," I said.

"Well why wouldn't I? Because of your foolish decision to cut ties with them, I now have to leave my home just to scout an area for you. You cut your tail off to spite your face," she said.

If you stumble upon this tale on Amazon, it's taken without the author's consent. Report it.

My eye twitched as I crossed my arms. I didn't say anything, since even I knew she was speaking nothing but the truth.

Had I not abandoned my position, my people, I would not have needed to ask Miss Beak for help. I could have had thousands at my disposal, and would have been able to track down this god, this Blue One, with quickness and ease.

"And no rebuttal. Ah well, I suppose I can't berate you too much. I'm rather proud of you Vim, for sparing that family," Miss Beak said as she went to pecking at her feathers under her left wing.

"Hmph."

I was in no mood to speak of the snakes either. They better hope the god really is here, or I'll hunt them down again and make them all into boots.

"So...? What do you want me to do? I'd like to get this over with so I can go home, it's about to be the storm season. It's my favorite season," she said.

Right... I gestured at the forest below. "Where did you feel it the strongest?" I asked.

Miss Beak shifted and lifted a leg, using her webbed foot to point at a distant section of the forest. Near a huge mountain. "There, near a lake."

"Then that's where you'll drop me. If I disappear, we found it. If I fall into it and nothing happens you can pick me back up and we'll try elsewhere," I said.

"Such a boring method."

"How would you do it?" I asked, a little annoyed at her. One moment she was complaining we were taking too long, the next she had issues with how I was trying to finish it as fast as possible!

"Me...? Hm..." Miss Beak tilted her head as she pondered that for a moment. "Well, if I was alone I'd set the forest on fire. All at once. The spots that don't burn down or the fires going out without cause or reason would tell me all I needed to know," she decided.

Well... yes, that would work. Especially with her abilities, but I didn't want to outright destroy this whole forest. This place was lush and beautiful, and old. Some of the trees beneath us were likely hundreds of years old at the youngest.

Destroying natural life made me sick to my stomach. It was one thing for it to be destroyed during battle, as to remove a god or a god's creation, but to do so without first even verifying the god was here...?

Though I had to admit it'd be effective. If my method, and the few others I had in mind, didn't work out we might be forced to attempt it.

"Fine. If my ways don't work we'll try yours. So? Can we begin?" I asked.

Miss Beak ignored me for a moment as she stared out at the world below. I watched the way her huge eyes soaked up the world, and wondered what the world looked like from her eyes. Mother had said

birds like her had superb eyesight, capable of seeing colors beyond what even I could. Possibly even able to see different wavelengths. And Miss Beak wasn't just a bird, a flamingo, she was a monarch. A very powerful one, empowered by hundreds of hearts. Odds are she had sight better than me by far.

Though maybe such sight would be too over stimulating for me.

"You'd think if a god so powerful that they could hide themselves from you, even when this close, they would have noticed your arrival by now. And attempted something to stop you from attacking," Miss Beak then said.

"They can't sense me. You know that," I said.

"Says who, Vim?"

"My parents. Now come on, let's get this over with. This Blue One has plagued me for hundreds of years, I'd like to get this over with already," I said as I stepped over to her.

Miss Beak lowered herself as to let me clamber up on top of her. I grabbed feathers as I climbed up, but did so in a way that I made sure I didn't break or dislodge any.

As I settled on her back, a bit behind her neck, Miss Beak shook a little as if to settle all the feathers I had bothered. "You're being prickly about it, so I'll just say this once here and now. You're acting rashly," she said.

"Rashly...? I'm charging forward to fight a god, just as I always do. What am I doing that is rash?" I asked. It wasn't as if I couldn't plan and scheme, laying traps and whatnot, but in this instance I couldn't do that. I didn't even know where the bloody god was for crying out loud.

Miss Beak turned her head around to look at me. "Your nation saw wisdom in her words. Enough so to risk your ire. For so many, so many good and honest people, to do such a thing even at the risk of your wrath... that has to mean something, Vim," Miss Beak said.

"Enough. Miss Beak you're my oldest friend, but if you don't shut up and drop me over there by that lake I will...!"

"You'll what? Kill me? Stop talking to me too? Go ahead. If that's what it takes for you to hear reason, so be it."

I grabbed one of her feathers, but not to threaten her. Instead I had done so as to make sure I didn't accidentally hurt her in other ways. "Miss Beak...!"

She glared at me for a moment, and then scoffed. "Fine. Endure your own hubris. Woe the world that must suffer it."

She then spread her wings and took off.

Chapter 534 The Blue Kingdom

Well, I found them.

Slowly standing up, I looked up at the sky I'd just fallen from. I couldn't see Miss Beak up there, but that wasn't too shocking. I couldn't see any of the hundreds of floating rocks either.

In fact...

Looking around at the vast field of wheat I'd fallen in, I shook my head at a god's audacity.

"No respect for the laws," I said as I looked around at a completely different dimension.

I was no longer in a dense forest, with cold and damp weather. I was instead in a huge plain, covered in wheat and barley, and it was seemingly a hot summer. A blazing sun was high overhead, and not a cloud was in sight.

Taking a deep breath of warm air, I noted that I didn't smell or taste a hint of the damp forest Miss Beak and I had just been in. All I smelled was the wheat. The wheat and the rich soil it was growing from.

Brushing myself off I walked through the tall stalks towards the road I had seen while falling. It was a short distance away, and I found it after only a few moments of searching.

Stepping out onto the paved road, I sighed as I looked up and down it. While in the sky, while falling, I had not noticed or seen any structures nearby. But I also hadn't been given long to look. I had felt myself go through some kind of barrier, feeling like a glass ceiling, after dropping from Miss Beak's back, but once I was through it I had fallen rather abruptly. I had felt the barrier high in the sky, yet once passed it I had found myself falling straight into the wheat field within the blink of an eye.

Which wasn't too odd, really. God's abilities, and the world they warped using them, acted in odd ways. Sometimes without any sense at all... but...

"All this wheat, surely someone harvests it," I said as I studied the road.

It was not just paved, it was paved not with just basic stone, but a fine mix of concrete. One that was obviously unnatural.

The road looked perfect. As if it had just been made hours ago, and had yet to have its first footfall or wheel scuff it. The grayish looking alabaster that it looked like was pristine. Too pristine.

"Typical," I spat as I chose a direction and headed down it.

Miss Beak would not follow. I relied on her, and trusted her and her abilities, but this was a god we were talking about. A powerful one, too. I didn't want her to get hurt for no reason. But that being said, I could have used her wings right now. Or hell, even if not her wings, her mere height. She was tall enough I bet she was able to see where I should be going...

Plus, now I was surrounded by divinity. The very air was thick of it, making my hairs stand up.

This was the place. Or well, a god was here at least. I wasn't sure yet if this was actually The Blue One or not, but I'd find out soon enough.

Walking along the paved road, with wheat on one side and barley on another, I found myself confused.

I had been walking for the better part of an hour, and still I'd neither found any sign of civilization nor did the endless fields end.

Slowing a little, I rolled a shoulder to see if I was being manipulated somehow. The feel of my muscles told me I was indeed moving, and nothing was afflicting me. At least, as far as I could tell.

Mental attacks did not affect me. Not the way they were supposed to. One of my mother's finer works. Any attacks to my mind, my psyche, were treated the same way my body did a physical attack. The affected part of the brain, the afflicted area, was decomposed and replaced by fresh and healthy material. By moving certain parts of my body, such as rolling a shoulder or twiddling fingers, I could tell if my motor functions were inhibited in any way.

They weren't, so...

"An endless world, maybe?" I wondered as I looked around.

Not an impossibility. But it made no sense. This place was supposed to be hidden from me, right? And it had been. If not for the snake monarch bringing me here, and telling me exactly where it was, I'd never had found this place. So... for what purpose would the god have created an endless loop of fields...?

Though it might not be looped... it might just be very big...

As I continued walking, I started to pay attention to the road. The dirt and grass around it. The stalks of wheat and barley.

It didn't take long for me to realize it likely wasn't a loop, or an infinite space. There were too many variations. Too many unique things that didn't repeat, like an ant-hill or the occasional small rodent or bird.

"Just miles of grains..." I groaned as the road started to turn a little. It angled to what I assumed was eastward, but honestly I wasn't sure if my assumed cardinal directions were correct at the moment. This wasn't the real world, after all.

The author's tale has been misappropriated; report any instances of this story on Amazon.

An hour turned into two. Then two more. Then, right as the sun high overhead had started to lower enough to start setting... I finally found something worth noticing.

A distant building. One with two large windmills attached to it. Some very dense gray smoke was coming from one of the building's chimneys, and there seemed to be voices on the wind. I couldn't recognize any of them, or anything being said, but I picked up my pace as I hurried to it as to do so.

Reaching the building, I found it was some kind of farmstead. Giant stacks of hay bales were piled in orderly fashion near one of the windmills, and they even had little white chalk marks upon them. Judging by the little marks and numbers on either side of them, they were marked not just for the date they had been harvested but maybe the warehouse or district they were to be sent to.

The sight of my own system being used made my back itch, but I knew better than to think it was really my system being used. After all I had learned it from my mother... and if this Blue One had taught them too...

"Come now! Stop dawdling!" a woman's voice shouted from within one of the windmills. The language was the same one I had taught to the nation I had brought up, but that too was not a surprise. I had taught them the language of the gods for a reason. It had stemmed from my idea of knowing one's enemy as to defeat them.

Stepping off the road and onto a stone path that led to the farmstead, I focused a little as I neared the main windmill.

I sensed divinity, as I did all around me, but I did not sense the source of it. If the god was here, they were a very weak one. Not only did I not sense a god, I didn't sense any hearts either. No sources at all. There were no monarchs here or at least none were nearby... so...

Reaching the windmill right as the source of the voice from earlier stepped out of the large door of it, I went still as I watched... a very human looking person emerge.

"Oh my...! Hello!" she noticed me right away, and gave me a look of confused concern as she glanced around.

"Hello..." I greeted who I assumed was completely human. She didn't just have no traits to speak of... she smelled completely human too. And that was very easy to confirm, since it was clear she'd been working hard for many hours. She needed a bath.

The woman gave me a look as she looked around again. "I'm sorry, was there to be a delivery today...? Or are you a new farmhand? I'd requested some more, but it's not even been two days since then! Usually takes you guys a lot longer to respond!" she said, speaking happily as she brushed her hands off on her dirty dress and walked over to me.

"Who's here, Staple?" another woman's voice asked from within the windmill.

"Not sure yet!" Staple shouted happily and then she smiled and nodded at me, telling me to answer finally.

Should I answer honestly...? For a tiny moment I debated playing along, acting a fool or maybe just innocent. But I was honestly not in the mood to do such a thing, so instead I just nodded.

"My name is Vim... I'm sorry but I am actually looking for the Blue One," I said.

The human tilted her head, and in doing so revealed she was sunburned on her neck. Her hair had hidden it before. "The Blue...? Oh! You mean the Goddess, don't you!" Staple laughed a moment and nodded. "I see! You're a visitor! Huh... wonder how you ended up here..." she then added as she crossed her arms and studied me.

"Not sure myself. If you'd just point me in the direction I should go, I'd appreciate it..." I said as the other woman appeared.

This one wasn't human. She had a set of white horns protruding from the sides of her head, though otherwise looked human enough.

"A visitor...? Here?" the horned one asked as she walked over. She had the remnants of crushed wheat, the makings of flour, all over her arms and hands.

"Can you believe it? I've only ever seen them in the city! Welcome to the Blue Kingdom!" Staple said with a happy tone as she gestured at me.

The horned woman frowned at me. "You're lost, lad. You're nearly a full day away from the city, and then days away again from the capital. How'd you get here of all places...?" she asked me.

"I'd like to know that myself," I admitted.

The human woman, Staple, then turned and happily clapped her hands. "Let's let Marie take him! She's never been to the capital before!" Staple declared.

My eye twitched and I raised a gentle hand to stop what I feared was about to happen. "I'm okay. If you just told me which way to go, I could..." I started to say, but neither of them seemed to care to listen.

"You going to do her chores while she's away? That girl will, accidentally, get lost a few times, taking weeks to get back," the horned woman said.

"Aww, let the poor girl go! She's been sad ever since her dad died, let her have some fun! We can all share in the chores, it'll be only a few minutes apiece if we do," Staple suggested.

"I really just..." I spoke up again, but wasn't able to get more out as the horned woman looked at me and shook her head.

"Law is the law. All visitors must be taken straight to one of the guards, or the capital. One of us has to take you, whether we want to or not," she said plain and simply.

Great. I was in no mood to be treated like some honored guest, or worse a bum. I was here to kill their god, not to be welcomed with open arms!

"Come on! It's about to be night, you can eat and stay here then leave in the morning!" Staple happily said as she hurried to head for the nearby building.

"Wait..." I groaned as I debated just running off. It wasn't like they'd be able to catch me, and even if they did...

"Aye, ain't no one going to say we don't take care of guests!" the horned one said as she stepped forward. She reached over to grab me by the shoulder and arm, as to force me to join her.

I ignored her flour-stained grip as I bit back a few choice words. "I really am in a hurry..." I tried again to get out of this.

"No point hurrying, lad. Whatever you're set to do will come to pass, just let it be," the horned woman said, speaking to me as if I was some tiny child.

Annoyed beyond reason, I let loose a deep sigh as I allowed her to drag me to their home.

Just great. The worst part was I couldn't even justify running off. I still saw only a sea of fields as far as I could see in any direction. That meant if I ran the wrong way, there was a chance I'd spend more time running around searching for this blasted capital than I would spent just waiting for a guide to show me the way.

Although not happy about it, and antsy beyond belief... I went ahead and accepted their odd hospitality.

I've been searching for this Blue One for hundreds of years. A single night won't matter, I guess...

Plus... spending a night with them might give me some more insight into their life. And more importantly, their Goddess.

Chapter 535 To Be A Visitor

Marie was an upbeat girl, but also was one of the worst guides I'd ever had in my life.

Which was saying something, since I've had more than my fair share of odd ones. Like those unable to even speak, or even recently a monarch of all things. At least the snake that had just led me here had done its job properly and without any deviations or distractions...

"Let's go see what that is!" Marie shouted as she grabbed my sleeve and tugged me away from the food stall we'd just got some pretzels from.

I sighed as I allowed the young woman to drag me over to a fountain. We left the small market area and entered what seemed to be an even larger one. The center of it, Marie's current focus, was a large fountain... one that oddly had rather blue water within it.

Stepping up to the fountain alongside Marie, I frowned at the water within it. It seemed to not just be very blue; it looked like it was even faintly glowing...

"How does it spit water out like that?" Marie asked happily.

"Pressure..." I answered. But I was not interested in the fountain itself, or its many little spigots and water features. Instead I couldn't help but try and comprehend the water within it.

Really, what was it...? Some kind of coloring? It almost looked like some kind of lubricant or something... it was that bright of a blue...

Reaching down, I went ahead and put my hand into the water. I cupped some and brought it up to my face, to smell it.

It smelled kind of sweet.

"Should you drink it?" Marie asked.

"Probably... not..." I let the water drop back down, but wasn't too confident in my statement. If it was standing water, I'd have not hesitated to answer in such a way, but this water was flowing. In each cardinal direction around the fountain, little grooves in the ground emerged. Water was flowing from the fountain, spreading outward from it inside the grooves almost as if acting like a water network system for the city or something.

It'd surprise me if this was part of the city's actual water supply. This capital was large, bustling beyond measure, but it seemed a tad... undeveloped.

There was no electricity. And few if any places had plumbed water, it seemed. The place was clean, its people cleaner, but there was no denying this place was far more primitive compared to most of the other nations in the world today. Especially the one I had helped build.

But I knew better than to outright claim this place was undeveloped. Because for what it lacked in technology... it made up in other ways.

Like this blue water.

I turned, losing focus on the fountain and its glowing waters, and watched a large bull walk by. It was thrice the size of any bull in existence, and its golden lines of fur made it glimmer like a gem as it pulled a huge wagon full of massive crates. I didn't need to feel the heart within it to know it was a monarch.

It wasn't the first monarch I'd seen. Marie and I had taken nearly a week to get here to this capital, and along the way we had passed dozens of similar monarchs. None were the same type, or style, but they all had the same societal function. Working hard labor, or something like it.

Most had been working in the huge fields we'd passed to get here. Miles and miles of food were tendered and harvested by the creations of the gods, it seemed.

This wasn't the first time I'd seen monarchs used in such a way... but I had to admit it was the first time I'd seen it done so smoothly. I wasn't entirely sure if the monarchs had much sentience yet, since I'd been trying to avoid them, but it did seem to be that they obeyed orders. More than once I'd seen a human, or a non-human, walking alongside them and talking to them... not in a way a farmer would his favorite horse, but as a co-worker. A friend.

"Vim! Let's try that next!"

I turned to watch young Marie run off. She crossed a street and headed into a store, one that looked like it had large wheels of cheese displayed in its window.

Sighing I went to follow and join her. Although annoying, I actually found her childish actions useful. Being led around by her like this had allowed me to easily blend in and look around, which now I realized was difficult.

A case of theft: this story is not rightfully on Amazon; if you spot it, report the violation.

Although this capital, this City of the Blue, seemed rather populated... everyone seemed to obviously know one another. Upon entering through the main gate, one of the men stationed there had recognized Marie. The man had known her parents, having been from Marie's hometown originally.

Strangely enough the man, and Marie, were both human. Entirely.

A rarity throughout the rest of the world, but not here. From what I had been able to tell so far, from the few small towns we had passed through on our way here and this capital that I've seen so far, nearly half of all citizens of this nation were human. A startling percentage, especially when the population of this place was rather large. This was not some little community, or city-state. This nation had hundreds of small towns, spread out over hundreds of miles. And each town had thousands if not tens of thousands of inhabitants.

And half of that large population was human...? It should be impossible, but here it was.

But such a thing only further proved a god was here.

"A whole block...? Surely not! Here, I'll give you an assortment though!"

As I entered the cheese shop, I glanced around at the hundreds of truckles. Wheels of cheese. They were stacked on shelves, with little loaves packaged nicely in little displays in front of them. The place looked far too fancy, and had likely over a hundred different types of cheeses... some rather unique.

A woman with floppy ears was behind the counter that Marie stood before. They looked like the ears of a pig, and she was gathering up a bunch of smaller loaves of cheese and putting them into a basket.

"Here you go, dear. Don't eat it all at once, you'll get a stomach ache," the cheese clerk said as she handed over the basket to Marie.

"Thanks...!" Marie happily accepted it, grinning wildly as she turned to face me. She showed off the basket, that looked a little heavy since it was full of dozens of blocks of cheese, so I went ahead and took it from her.

"Thank you..." I thanked the pig-woman, and wondered why this place had no form of money. Just like everything else Marie has purchased, or acquired, she's not had to pay for a single thing. And by the looks of it, no one else did either.

"It's nothing. I suggest Lerry's for drinks, he's the shop at the corner down the way with a yellow sign," the woman said.

"I'll go there now!" Marie happily said as she hurried out of the shop.

I sighed as the young woman left the shop without any hesitation. "Sorry, first time she's been here. Thank you for the cheese," I said as I went to follow her.

"All is well, visitor. You'll learn it too, eventually."

I paused at the door and glanced back at the pig-woman. She had a gentle smile on her face as she nodded, as if to tell me it really was okay.

Should I read more into that...? Or...

Looking away, I decided it didn't matter. I really didn't like how easily so many people seemed to be able to tell I was a foreigner in their country, but I wasn't sure yet what to actually think about it. Maybe it was for the best...

Leaving the cheese shop I found Marie had gotten sidetracked again. She was several shops down, heading towards the yellow signed shop, but had stopped to talk to a pair of women. They were sitting at a small table, and by the looks of it they were playing some kind of board game.

Walking over to them, I glanced down at the basket of cheeses... and wondered what I was going to do with them.

There was enough cheese in this basket to feed a large family for weeks. Just how much did that pig-woman think Marie was capable of eating...? The young woman was scrawny and small... and human, of course.

"I'm Marie!" the young girl introduced herself to the two, and they both glanced at me on my approach.

"And you, a visitor! Showing him around, are you?" one of them asked.

Marie nodded happily. "He's here to see the Goddess!"

The two frowned in understanding. "Most are, aren't they...? Though admittedly we don't get many anymore do we? Used to get you folks all the time, back in the day!" one said.

"Right...? Come to think of it, how long has it been since I'd last seen one...?"

The other woman scoffed. "Like you could remember anything past your last move. Anyway, young Marie, make sure you escort him to the center keep before nightfall. They only allow visitors during the day, since the Goddess performs her miracles at night," she said.

Marie nodded quickly. "We were heading there just now!"

No we hadn't been... "Miracles...?" I asked innocently.

The two older women frowned at me, as if they couldn't understand why I'd just asked such a thing. Then the one on the left nodded understandingly. "Right... outsiders don't live amongst their gods anymore, do they?"

"That they don't! Makes you wonder how they all survive out there!" the other added.

"He doesn't seem that bad! He's been letting me slack off and have fun!" Marie lowered her voice and said as she stepped forward, as if to whisper about me out of earshot.

Least she was aware, I guess...

Both of the women smirked and giggled at that. "Must be a mighty good one then, huh!"

Marie nodded happily at that.

"Well, if he's going to oblige you, may as well make the most of it! Why not head to the theater, or the water-park?" one of the women then said.

"Where're they!?" Marie asked excitedly.

I groaned as they quickly told her of all the sightseeing features of the capital.

Chapter 536 Familiar Faces

Walking up the stairs, I felt a little bad for the young human I had just likely gotten in trouble.

Or well... about to get in a lot of trouble.

She had spent most the day running around having fun. I had joined along, mostly to see more of the city myself, but all I'd accomplished in doing so made me ever more eager to meet this Blue One.

This city was a utopia. Even though lacking in certain comforts, such as finer plumbing and electricity... in every other manner this place was perfect.

Thanks to Marie, I had been able to visit many of the shops all throughout the capital. I had been able to walk through whole districts, even through some of the housing ones. From the food stalls, to cloth shops and everything in-between, they had an abundance of goods and products. And not only did they have a lot of it, pretty much everything was free to take. By the end of the day I had struggled to carry all the junk Marie had gathered haphazardly, simply because every shopkeeper deigned it on themselves to bless her with far more than she needed.

There was nothing wrong, or too strange, with a capital city being flushed with goods and products. Nor even was there anything too strange about a society that didn't use any form of currency or credit. Especially when one considered that they utilized monarch labor to support the backbone of it.

Food was cheap when a giant monarch was capable of tilling miles of land with ease, doing the work of hundreds of stout workers without breaking a sweat.

And there was not much of a surprise to see, and learn, that this place had basically no crime at all. And such a fact was made ever more apparent by the constant lack of guards or soldiers.

There were no guards, except at the entrances to the city. And even then they hadn't been outright guards or border patrol; they had simply been there to guide and direct the traffic. It wasn't as if Marie and I had needed to check-in, explain who we were, or pay any kind of entry tax or something.

And to top it off the city was littered with community driven projects.

Massive theaters for entertainment. Water parks for children to cool off in the summer heat. An abundance of fancy and unique foodstuffs to give the citizens a myriad of options as to not get bored...

Pausing half-way up the stairs I turned to look out at the capital around me.

I was climbing up to the so called Keep. The castle where the Blue One, the Goddess of this land, resided.

It was quite a climb. It felt like I was ascending a huge mountain. The castle was still a distance away, and was huge... and by the looks of the city below, the whole city had been kept at a single level on purpose. So that those at the castle could overlook and oversee the whole area.

From up here the massive city looked empty, a little. Thanks to not having electricity, they relied on candles and lamplight. Oils and waxes. The dull glow of such fires lit up the city, but only in pockets here and there. Large swaths of the capital looked dark and empty... and likely were so because they weren't homes but businesses and industry. Warehouses and shops, where now that it was night-time had no one in them and thus needed not to be lit up.

But, thanks to that darkness from a lack of consisting lighting... there was another tall tell that this place was unique.

A faint blue glow could be seen all throughout the city. In most cases it was a small blue line, but occasionally it curved or pooled. Such as in the fountains. The glow was obvious, since I'd seen it since entering the city. It was the water that flowed all throughout the city, glowing as if from an algae or something.

The whole city seemed to be inundated with the stuff. It flowed through cisterns, aqueducts, and every pond or pool of water was connected to it. Even the water park that Marie had enjoyed had used that water... which had concerned me, but I wasn't sure what to think about it yet.

I felt divinity from the water, but no more than I felt in everything else here at least. If it was doing something unique beyond just being created by a god I couldn't tell.

For all I knew it was just a decorative thing.

Turning back ahead, I sighed as I went back to climbing the stairs.

I'd left Marie behind. At the inn.

She had spent so much time running around, enjoying the sights and pleasures of the city, she had misjudged the time of day. And once she noticed the sun going down, it had been too late to take me to the castle. So she had, with honest regret and embarrassment, found an inn with me and promised to take me to the castle first thing in the morning.

Unauthorized usage: this narrative is on Amazon without the author's consent. Report any sightings.

I didn't mind it though. I played along, and once she had laid down and passed out thanks to how much fun she had all day, I had slipped away on my own.

Honestly I was glad for it.

I was to confront a god. Fight her, and kill her.

It was better that Marie had nothing to do with it.

The inn I had found with her had been far to the north of the city. Almost near the same gate we had entered from. She had questioned why we'd found one so far away from the castle, but I had gotten her to ignore that by focusing on the diner we had ate instead.

Hopefully that was far enough. I expected, and knew, there would be collateral damage from my upcoming battle with the god... but...

Glancing again behind me, at the quiet city... I felt a little bad for them all.

It was obvious the god had built this with their comfort in mind. The people were simple, and odd, but not unhappy. They had jobs, which were mundane but filling. They had all the food and water they wanted. They had... well... as far as I could tell, freedom even.

I could see now why so many of my people had been lulled by this Blue One, if this was what they had been promised.

Yes, my nations had technology. Certain things that were far better, in terms of quality of life...

But the kind of simplicity this place offered was very attractive. Especially for non-humans.

A lot of them liked living under a higher power. It gave them comfort. Surety in their lives.

Especially when that higher power seemed so willing and able to help them.

This place suffered no storms. No famines. No war. It was warm during the day, and cool at night. Everyone born here was healthy, and everyone was friendly with one another. Here you were treated as a neighbor, even if you'd never met that individual before in your life.

Whereas in my nations...

I thought of the wars. The famines, thanks to the trains being stolen. The wars with other nations around us, who were envious of our wealth and lives. I thought of the crime that required patrols and the lives lost to construction as we built wonders such as giant dams for power, or tunnels for the trains.

My nation had been built by blood and sweat. Because we couldn't, I couldn't, just snap my fingers and fix a problem.

So yes... I saw the attraction. I could understand the lure of this place, and all it offered.

But I also saw the shadows lurking within it.

Shadows casted by giant monarchs.

Shadows of warehouses full of goods, stolen from my people.

Shadows of a god, looming over you constantly.

Reaching the top of the stairs, I slowed as I watched someone walk out from a small building. One of stone.

She had wings. Very... familiar... ones...

"Nectar...?" I couldn't believe what I was seeing, as I watched a single-eared bat walk over to me with a smile.

"Hello, Lord Vim. I've been waiting for you," Nectar said with a greeting.

By my parents, it was her! Not only would I recognize her scars, the missing ear and side of her face that I had ripped off in anger so many years ago, I recognized that voice. It was older, deeper, but that was to be expected...

Stunned, I was at a loss for words as she gave me a soft smile as she tilted her head at me. "What took you so long...? You've been in this nation for over a week now!"

Coughing lightly, I smiled and nodded. "I got a little... sidetracked," I admitted.

"Huh... here I thought you'd be running around, killing all the monarchs. Yet you've not harmed a single one, have you? Why is that?" Nectar asked.

Because I hadn't wanted the god to notice I was here and flee, of course...

Glancing her up and down, I wondered how long she'd been here. She had disappeared not long after the train-incident... not that I ever blamed her. But I had not realized she had come here, I had simply thought she had retreated. To live away from me and those around me.

"You look well," I said, and I meant it.

Nectar's wings shifted a little... and then she slowly nodded. "I am. I even have children now, Vim. In fact I recently greeted my first grandchild," she said.

Oh my... "Congratulations," I said.

She smiled and nodded, seemingly proud. "Yes... She is the light of my life..."

Hm... "So, as glad as I am to see you again..." I started to say.

Nectar nodded, her only remaining ear fluttering a little as she did. "Yes. I'm here for a reason."

"And that would be...?"

"To take you to her. She's been waiting," she said.

I see.

"Going to take me to her?" I asked carefully.

Nectar shifted a little, and gave me a strange smile. "Do you think I'd actually try to stop you, Vim...? Even if I want to, desperately so, I know it is futile. I'd have more luck grabbing the sun," she said.

"Hm... Do you think I won't do it?" I asked.

Nectar's wings shuffled, and she nodded. "You will. I... know you will. But I have hope. I have faith," she said.

Hope? Faith? "That... what? That she'll defeat me?" I asked. Nectar has seen me kill dozens of gods with her own eyes, I couldn't imagine her actually believing such a thing was possible. Even if she had so called faith.

"That you'll be swayed by her words," Nectar answered.

Ah...

I gently nodded, understanding what she meant.

For a long moment there was silence, and then Nectar gently coughed and nodded. "Let's go, then..." she whispered.

"Lead the way."

Chapter 537 Nectar

"What'd you think of the capital?" Nectar asked as she led me through the castle.

"It's nice. Clean. Safe," I said.

Nectar chuckled as she nodded. "Very. I'd dare say nicer than yours, other than the lack of plumbing. The lights? I don't miss those. They had hurt my eyes at night, especially when flying. But I really miss a real toilet," Nectar said.

"Make one?" I suggested. She should know how.

Nectar was quiet for a moment, and then she shrugged. "Maybe one day."

Hm...? Was that tone regret? Sure sounded like it...

For a tiny moment I considered offering helping her do so. Maybe she had forgotten how, or something. But...

"Well... I admit at least this place is nice. Do you really have no crime at all?" I asked.

"Oh, occasionally there are fights, I suppose. But there is no theft, no property crime or murder. Your nations had little to no crime thanks to how harsh your punishments were. Here? No one commits a crime because there is no need to. The people are simple. And in their simplicity they have everything they want, from birth," Nectar said.

"Hm," I nodded, though wasn't sure how much I believed it. Maybe the reason they had no crime was because of all the monarchs walking around. They were conduits to their god, and as such were rather potent deterrents if you thought about it...

"To be honest, Vim... I'd claim your lands were more perfect. At least in certain terms," Nectar then said.

"Trying to honey up to me are you?" I asked.

She slowed a moment and glanced behind at me. "Still making your odd jokes. No. I meant it. This place is not as perfect as yours," she said.

"It's not my place anymore. I stepped down as Lord of War..." I hesitated a moment and frowned. "A hundred or so years ago...?" I said after a moment's consideration. Somehow I knew I was wrong. Had it been two? Three centuries...? Surely not more than that, right...?

"Vim, it's been almost four hundred years since you left," Nectar answered for me.

I flinched. "Figures..."

She chuckled at me. "Still, I stand by what I said. But that does not mean this place is lesser than your kingdoms, Vim! No... I find there is a strange beauty to imperfection. This land is a simple one, without the hustle and bustle of yours, but it is the lack of such stress that makes it lovely," she said.

I nodded slowly, since I understood what she was saying. "Such peace is the end-all goal after all."

"Hm... it is..."

We rounded a corner, and the hallway we were in got a bit bigger. The place was made mostly of stone, but had that cleanliness to it that shouldn't be real. The stones looked... old, and looked like they had a slight layer of moss on them. Yet I neither smelled, or felt beneath my feet, such moss.

And to top it off, I could tell certain things weren't... normal.

Certain hallways we passed looked too long to be real. Some doors that were open revealed rooms that were far too large in comparison to the available space around them. Windows revealed gardens, or scenery that did not make any sense. One of the windows we'd passed a few hallways ago had been overlooking a gentle beach. And I knew such a thin had not existed outside of this castle.

But I was not shocked to see such things, nor worried over them.

This place had been made the god. It wasn't natural. Such rule-breaking physics was only to be expected.

"How many live here...? Or well, under her rule?" I asked as we passed another hallway. One that looked like it warped, with the floor slowly angling upward and circling around. As if wrapping around itself.

"Throughout the whole nation? Nearly three million, roughly," Nectar said.

I whistled, but only to a point.

That had not been as many as I had thought. Especially since my nation had been nearly ten million strong. If their numbers were only at three million, even after four hundred years, then they must not have imported many from my nation at all.

"I had figured more of you would have joined. Did you not accept everyone as you claimed you would...?" I asked.

Nectar slowed a little as to look back at me. "You may have left your people, Vim... but they did not leave you. Most, although fully willing to be cordial and to trade with us, chose not to join. They remained under their own banner," she said.

"Hmph. And let me guess, they've fallen terribly since?" I asked.

"Actually, no. I've not returned since leaving, but Kriss had visited them often before he passed away. Your nation is flourishing Vim, and doing so mightily well. They haven't needed to conquer anyone or anything in hundreds of years, nations have willingly joined them on their own accord," Nectar said.

Although very excited and proud to hear such a thing, I focused on something far more important. "Kriss...?"

This novel is published on a different platform. Support the original author by finding the official source.

She nodded gently. "He was one of the last to join us, amongst us commanders... He had firmly believed you'd return, and had wanted to be there when you did. But eventually he found himself alone, and tired of dealing with the politics and drama and so came here to live his last years in peace. He died fifty odd years ago," she said.

Hearing of such loyalty from that bull of a man made my chest hurt.

"He had been a good man," I said softly.

"Better than most can believe, yes."

"Did... did he ever have children?" I asked. If so I'd like to meet them.

"No. He came here at the end of his life, Vim, he had arrived sick."

That's too bad...

I was about to ask more, about the other commanders she had hinted had joined her... but we walked past another hallway. One that had that glowing blue water in it.

Slowing to a stop, I down the hallway. In the center of it, flowing endlessly and smoothly, was the blue water in a small groove in the floor. A tiny line of blue ran down the center of the hall, and diverted occasionally into other hallways as it did.

Nectar noticed my pause and stopped as well. She turned around, her wings shifting a little as she stepped over to me and stared down the hall with me.

"We call it the lifeblood," she explained.

I frowned at that. "Why so...?" I asked warily.

"It is what feeds our farms, Vim. We do not water our crops, or our herd animals, with water from springs or lakes. We do so with this," she said with a point at it.

Wanting to groan at that, I suddenly felt like throwing up all the food and drink I'd enjoyed the last few days. "Why?" I asked.

"Well... because it's special...? The Goddess grants it to us. It allows crops to grow abundantly, as I'm sure you saw as you traveled through the lands. And a single gulp can keep even the biggest of bulls hydrated for days. It is potent," she said.

Gross.

I shook my head and turned away. "Poison," I said.

Nectar chuckled at me as she hurried to join me. "I kind of figured you'd say so. But whether you like it or not, its effectiveness is clear. And I've never seen anyone suffer or grow sick from it, and in fact the opposite. I believe it is thanks to the lifeblood that we have no sickness, or ailments," she said.

Possibly. "God's gifts are capable of such things," I admitted.

"Yet still you claim it a poison," she said.

Well... "Yes? Have any of you tried not surviving off it?" I asked.

Nectar slowed and frowned at me. "What do you mean?"

"Have you seen what happens once you wean yourself off it? Say... leaving this land, and eating and drinking normal food?" I asked.

Nectar's frown deepened. "We have many people who leave this nation, and the safety of the Goddess's barrier. They never seem to have any problems, Vim..."

"Yea? How long?" I asked.

"How long...? I... I don't know? Months, maybe?"

I huffed at that. "Right. No matter," I said.

Nectar obviously was upset, likely because she was trying to comprehend what I meant... but I was in no mood to tell her why.

Even if it had no adverse affects, even if it didn't harm you or make you addicted... it was from a god.

They didn't just live under a god's rule, they subsisted on it.

They survived because of a god. They ate, they drank, they lived, thanks to a god. They allowed nearly every facet of your life to rely on a god's blessing.

Disgusting.

"Hm..." Nectar of course noticed my feelings of the matter, and likely knew full well I'd have thought such a thing from the beginning. She knew what I thought of gods.

"Your lack of any attempt to sway my opinions is rather worrisome," I said as we headed deeper into the castle.

"I'm not brilliant enough to try such a thing, Vim. You're as ancient and powerful as she is. You taught me all I know. All my father had known, too. I know I don't have the words, or the wisdom, to convince you in any form or fashion. If it's even possible at all," Nectar said.

"What you just said speaks well of your wisdom, Nectar, don't sell yourself short," I said.

Her single ear fluttered as she glanced at me. "Thanks... Um... might be rude to ask now, so late, but how have you been Vim?" she asked.

"I'm always fine, Nectar. You know that. Thank you for asking though," I said.

She tilted her head at me, but nodded.

"Why's the castle so empty, by the way?" I asked, since I suddenly felt a little awkward.

She smiled softly and chuckled. "She sent everyone else away. You should know why, Vim..."

Right... "Speaking of everyone else, I noticed you have a rather sizable human population."

Nectar nodded. "Yes. Goddess Blue likes them. This land was originally for them, for the humans."

I see... "Part of that faction yet allows all of you to live amongst them?" I asked. Usually the gods who sided with humans detested non-humans and all other types. Such a thing was rare.

"She's a genuinely good person, Vim. You'll see," she said.

I scoffed at that, but said nothing.

We walked in silence for a bit, until we came to some stairs. Large ones, which led down instead of up. Yet as we started to descend them, I felt the air grow thinner. As if we were suddenly rising thousands of feet into the air, to the point my ears felt like they wanted to pop.

Down below, I could see a large set of double-doors. Ones that were open wide. And the room they led to was bright. The kind of bright that came not from firelight, or even powered lamps.

That was sunlight. Real sunlight. In the middle of the night.

"You don't have your spear, Vim," Nectar then whispered.

Glancing at Nectar... I studied the way she stayed focus. She wasn't taking her eyes off the door we were nearing. Likely our destination.

"No. I don't," I said.

Nectar's wings made noise as they shifted, opening and closing a little, and she grabbed her shirt. Rather tightly.

The sight of her doing such a thing reminded me of her youth. When she used to chase me and her father around. Before her wings had been strong enough to carry her. She had been a timid thing back then.

"There are... a few of her loyal ones with her. Monarchs and such... they refused to leave," Nectar said softly.

I smiled gently at her. Was she trying to warn me this was a trap...? I had figured it might be since arriving, so that was not worth fretting over.

"I don't know if they'll try anything... but they might. I begged them, as did she, to let her speak with you first. To try to reason with you," she said as she finally looked at me.

Her eyes were glistening with worry.

"It won't make a difference, Nectar," I said gently.

She gulped, and nodded.

"I know."

## Chapter 538 The Blue One

Walking into a large domed room, I had to calm myself and unwind muscles that had gone taught and tight. I had grown slightly apprehensive as we had reached the end of the stairs.

The room was bright. I hadn't looked up yet, but I could feel the warmth of a real sun on my skin so didn't need to. I knew up above me would not be a roof, but instead a sky. A real one, with clouds and weather. A sun and more. Maybe even moons.

I didn't look to verify it because I couldn't take my eyes off my goal.

Standing in the center of the room, dead center, was a woman. One half submerged in glowing blue water, wearing a blue dress. One that looked as if it was as dry as can be, even though half submerged in water.

Nectar kept walking beside me as we approached the pool of water. There were dozens of those little gaps in the floor, acting like little aqueducts, which the pool water flowed out from, heading off into random directions. I stepped over one as I neared the pool, and glanced away from the god for a moment to look around.

Near the walls, which had massive blue and red curtains covering them, were monarchs. There was a giant ape, a blue bear, and a myriad of different other creatures. Most if not all of them were as big as Miss Beak. Their presence was not intimidating, but it was confirmation to just how powerful this god was. It took a lot of energy to summon a powerful monarch, and a lot of time and resources to do so properly. For her to have so many, plus all the minor ones I'd seen scattered around the nation... was rather telling of just how deep her reserves of power were.

This was not going to be an easy battle.

Stopping before the pool of glowing water, I breathed in a little as I sized up the Blue One.

She wasn't very blue at all, other than her dress and the water she was in. She had blonde hair, which glimmered, and had red eyes. She had a faint brown tint to her skin, but the way it glimmered not from wetness but something else told me she had modified her skin's tone with her power. It wasn't her natural one. It almost looked as if she had gold streaks all over her, though knowing gods such things weren't paint or gold flakes glued to her but actual gold in her skin.

"Lord Vim... I present you to The Blue One, our Goddess and Queen," Nectar said, her voice now back to normal. I said nothing, and neither did the god as Nectar then coughed and gestured at me. "Goddess... this is..." she started to say, but the god smiled and raised a hand.

"I know him well, Nectar. I was there for his birth."

My eyes narrowed at the woman, and I found myself questioning more than I had already.

She had been...? But I didn't recognize her. At all.

"Welcome, Vim Vitae. You likely don't remember me, but I was your mother's friend. My name is Lapis."

Lapis. Of course it was. "Mother had mentioned you," I said. I should have made the connection.

The Blue One smiled at me. "Had she...? That's lovely to hear."

"Depends on what she had said, don't you think?" I suggested.

"Your mother would not have said anything cruel about me. That was one of her good points."

My stomach twisted in disgust to hear a god speak so knowingly about my mother, and be right while doing so. But I kept the disgust in as I took a deep breath and glanced around.

None of the monarchs had moved. At least, from their positions. A few looked to have lifted their heads, or shifted their weight, but not a one had moved from where they were stationed. Their eyes of utter worry and fear reminded me of that snake. They were looking at me as if I was about to take something precious from them.

"Speaking of your mother... before we go any further I'd like to let you know how terribly wrong it was for them to do what they had done. No matter what you may think of me, or what may happen here, know that I deeply regret not doing more to stop it. It was... what I consider to be my greatest failure in life," Lapis then said.

My eyes twitched, but I knew better than to let her words bother me.

"I've heard such words before," I said simply.

Lapis simply nodded, but didn't try to say anything further.

Taking a deep breath, I sighed it out and again noticed the sweet smell... what was that? There was an aroma in the air, and the source of it could only be one thing.

Looking down to the pool of glowing blue water, or rather what I assumed was fashioned and colored after her namesake: lapis lazuli, or lazurite, I went ahead and stepped into it.

"Pretty, isn't it...? I made it by combining lapis gemstones with the snails from nearby. Like so," she said as she lifted a hand, and with a snap of a finger a creature appeared. Floating in a big bubble was a snail, one with a familiar shell.

"Hexaplex Trunculus," I said. I recognized the pigment now that she brought it up. It had a tiny bit of a shade of purple in it. That was likely where the smell came from.

"Of course. Your mother's scholar," Lapis said happily as she snapped her finger again and the bubble popped out of existence, as did the snail within it. I stepped into the warm pool of water, and shivered at the feel of pure divinity. The waters were thick of it.

The water only came up to my waist, which made me feel a little awkward. It was far above her stomach, nearly to her breasts. Was she that short, or did the pool have different depths? It didn't look like it did.

"What does it do?" I asked her as I waded towards her. I could sense a heart near her feet, and it wasn't her own. Was there some kind of hard to see monarch in the water with us...? The water was clear enough I could see her feet, and the little pieces of jewelry attached to them. Yet I didn't see anything down there with her.

"They ended up calling it lifeblood. As I'm sure you know, having done so yourself, it's exceptionally difficult to feed millions of people. Especially now that such a large portion of them are non-humans...! I don't know how you did it, Vim, because it took me to create this to accomplish it. And you of course did it without any divinity!" Lapis said as she reached down to gently splash at the water.

"Right..." I found that to be rather understandable. Even a god would find it difficult to make excess amounts of food, I guess.

"Not to mention the non-humans are so much more picky than the humans. They all have things they can and can't eat, and no matter how thin blooded they are they still eat twice as much as their human equivalent! I have thousands of hectares of food growing for mere hundreds of people. It's kind of annoying to be honest," Lapis spoke calmly, as if we were friends telling each other our woes.

I got where she was coming from though. That was why I had made the train-network, because it had taken that level of industry to support millions of non-human residents. Without it we had been incapable of feeding everyone, and in fact had gone through several famines before... and after, the trains had been ransacked and stolen.

Stepping up to Lapis, I considered for a half a moment just ending it here. She was in reach, and seemingly undefended. I could feel her divinity, all over the place but I didn't see nor feel any spells that would impede me from ending her life.

Instead though I simply knelt down, and plunged my hand into the water.

Lapis didn't even shift as I grabbed at the heart I felt, but couldn't really see. I found my fingers latching onto it, and surprisingly... as I lifted my hand and arm out of the water, I frowned at a heart. One pouring the glowing water from within. It was hard to keep hold of. It was expunging torrents of water from every inch of its surface, and the way it did so made it nearly impossible to grip it. Like an inverse of one of those giant boulder water fountain decorations, that floated on water.

The source of the glowing water. It hadn't been from her, not directly, but this heart.

"Neat isn't it...? I got the idea from your mother, if you can believe it," she said as she watched me study the thing.

Hearing such a thing made me want to throw it at her, so instead I just tossed it away. It plunked back into the pool, sinking back to the floor.

I could believe it.

A strange heart pouring out divine water was of no importance to me. Not when the source of it, the creator of it, was standing before me.

Reading on Amazon or a pirate site? This novel is from Royal Road. Support the author by reading it there.

I studied her a little better now that I was up close. She did indeed have gold streaks all over her body, and it wasn't paint or fake. I wonder if having gold in your skin itched?

"You look well, Vim. You don't look like your father much, but I can see your mother in you," she said.

"You knew them well?" I asked. It was funny that I'd heard the opposite before.

She nodded. "I had in fact helped them prepare for your birth. I had known your mother, from before; though we had not been the same... we had respected one another's work."

"Then... why am I only meeting you now?" I asked.

Lapis smiled, and in doing so revealed imperfect teeth. That was interesting, usually gods had perfect teeth. It was especially more so intriguing since she had obviously modified her body in other ways, what with her gold streaks in her skin. So it wasn't as if she was some kind of purist. "You know why, Vim. All associated with them became targets... and then... well," she didn't finish explaining as she gestured at me.

I scoffed at her. "Going to claim my actions are unjustified?" I asked.

"Hardly!" Lapis quickly shook her head. "I don't fault you at all, Vim! I can't say I agree to the lengths you have dared to accomplish your vengeance, but I don't fault you at all... no."

"You're not the first to say so, but I'll dare to say you're the first I believe," I said.

She chuckled a little, causing the water around us to ripple with light. The light emerged from her, floating along with the ripples and hit me. I tensed up a bit, expecting a spell, but none came. The ripples came and went, and with them the light. "I bet...! I can only imagine what others have said and done before you... hm... I must say you're quite a bit more imposing than I had expected. Are you as big as I see you as, or am I just seeing what my fear amplifies?" she asked me as she studied me.

I shrugged, not caring who or what she saw. It didn't matter. My fingers kept twitching, wanting to dart forward and grab at her.

"You're dying to take my life, aren't you...?" Lapis then asked.

I blinked and nodded. "Yes."

"Hm... tell me... you had arrived with two monarchs. Friends? Allies? Servants...? I had thought you didn't allow even them to survive your sight," she asked.

Shifting a little, I glared at the god and remained silent.

"I see... are they like your kingdoms? Your armies...? Just tools to be used? Like all the weapons you've forged to hunt us? Or are they more? From what I can tell, from listening to your conversation with adorable Nectar here, you seem to genuinely care for them. Tell me... why can you forgive them, and stay your hand, but can't do so for me...?" Lapis asked.

"You think you deserve to be spared?" I asked.

Her eyes slowly blinked, and she gave me a look of utter surety. "What have I done to justify your wrath, Vim?"

"If my scars could speak," I said.

The god's eyes narrowed a little, and I heard a monarch step forward. They didn't come closer, nor say anything, but their heavy footfall was unmistakable.

"When we first arrived on this world... we fought, you know?" Lapis then said.

I nodded. "I know."

"Hundreds had died. Fighting over blame. Over who was responsible," she continued.

I knew all about that too. They had lost a whole quarter of their population before I had even been born.

"Eventually we found peace, choosing to work together instead. Honestly I had thought it had been going well, all things considered," she said.

Although I knew about that, I only knew about it to a point. They had ceased their hostilities in hopes of finding a way back to whatever realm they had come from. Fearing the fact they needed the numbers to accomplish it. "Your own undoing," I said simply.

Lapis slowly nodded. "Yes. I agree. Once your mother figured out how much mana it'd take to open the gate, the shame everyone felt was... indescribable. I had watched people who had done terrible acts of cruelty, abandoning their humanity, fall to their knees and beg for forgiveness. Some even ended their own lives, from the utter despair. It was quite a moment," she said.

"For all the good it did you," I said.

She smirked. Lapis then gently pointed at me, with a finger wrapped in gold streaks. "And then you came along."

I nodded. "Then so I was."

Her finger twitched... and I half expected something to shoot out from it. A beam of light that sliced me in ways no knife could. Or a blackness that engulfed me, sending me to places unbelievable. Instead though... the finger simply lowered, going limp at her side.

"I don't blame you, Vim. Or your parents. I'd have done the same," she then said.

"You said that already."

She nodded. "And I should say it again. And again. I'm... sorry," she whispered.

I slowly shook my head. "This won't save you," I whispered back.

"I know."

"Wait...!" Nectar shouted, and I heard her wings snap open. To take flight. But I ignored her.

There was no point waiting anymore, was there...?

I admitted I felt she was being honest. For as much as a god could, at least.

But who cared?

So what if she was sorry. So what if she felt my vengeance was justified.

Did that give her the right to undo her wrongs...? Did that negate what had happened...?

No. It didn't.

A criminal's crime was not forgiven just because they were sorry. It did not fix what they had done. It did not right the wrongs upon the aggrieved.

Even if she's done nothing but good all this time... this nation, these people, even if she has kept these millions of people alive and healthy, it had no bearing on what was to happen. On what needed to happen.

One's future did not excuse one's past.

Stepping forward, I got within arm's reach of her... and realized she hadn't moved. And seemingly wasn't planning to.

"You're not going to try and stop me at all...?" I asked, almost not believing it.

Just by standing near her I could feel how powerful she was. Her divinity was not an ocean; it was an ocean with unending depth.

There was no reason for her not to at least try to survive. To at least try and escape me.

All the others had. Even the ones who had begged me, and apologized as she just had. Even the ones who had pleaded on their knees had attempted it.

Lapis gave me a gentle, knowing smile, as she shook her head. "All of my energy is constantly being used to support this nation. The barrier to keep outsiders from invading, or knowing we're here. The weather, to keep the crops healthy. The flow of lifeblood," she said as she gestured to the pool we stood in. "And so much more. To fight you would be to doom the two and a half million people who rely on me and my spells."

"If you stopped those spells, you could fight me," I said.

"Could I, Vim...?"

I nodded.

Her gentle smile turned into a soft smirk. "I dare say you underestimate yourself. You may not know what I am capable of, Vim, but don't forget. I had been there on your birth. I know exactly what you are, and are capable of doing."

"And I say it is you who does so. If you do not stop those spells, you will die. And with your death, so too will your citizens perish if they are that reliant upon you," I said. Surely she was smart enough to realize that...?

"Ah, but there is the cold truth."

"Hm?"

She pointed at herself. At her left breast, where I felt was her heart. "If I end my spells... my people die. And in that moment, I am the one who killed them," she explained. Then she pointed at me, at my heart. "If you end my life, and thus end theirs... then is it not you who killed those two and a half million people, Vim?"

I smirked at that. "Semantics."

"Is it though...? Are you saying I'm wrong?"

Slowly shaking my head, I sighed and agreed with her. "You're not. Those souls would be on my hands, not yours, in this context."

Lapis gave me a happy smile as she nodded. "I'd much rather die knowing that, than dying while hearing their cries echo throughout my soul."

"Lofty ideals. Yet all I hear is a woman's wiles. A god's malevolent schemes. If you think such a threat as two million souls will be enough to stay my hand, then you didn't know my mother at all as you claim to have," I said.

She breathed in, as to say something, but hadn't gotten a chance to.

"Lord Vim...!"

For a moment I ignored Nectar, but then decided to turn and glance at her. She had taken a step into the pool, a single one, and her wings were open and wide. She was looking at me with huge eyes of stressful worry. "Please... please...!"

I glared at her for a moment, and the desperate plea written all over her.

I'd never seen her like this. Ever.

But did it change anything...?

"I don't hate the sword."

Nectar went quiet as I turned to look back at Lapis.

"I don't hate the metal. Or the fires that forge it. Or the oils which cool it. I don't hate the one who hammers it into shape, or sharpens it long after it's been finished," I said.

Lapis glared at me for a moment. "You just hate the one who swings it," she said, understanding.

I nodded.

"But Vim... in this case it would be you who swings it!" Nectar shouted.

Possibly.

But that was the life they all had chosen. The life she, this god, had chosen.

I may be swinging the sword, but I did so because she had done so first. Because they had done so first.

And although mother and father had so desperately begged me to be the one to end that cycle of suffering...

"You're right... I will be the one to end their stories. Two and a half million souls, and I'll be the one to write their final chapter. With my own hands," I admitted. If she dying ended this nation's lifeblood as she called it, dooming them to starvation and the outside elements... Then yes. Many would die. But so too would man live, having grown stronger in doing so. Learning to live on their own devices, and not the crutch of a god's whims.

Lapis's eyes softened, and I knew it was because she knew. She had heard it. Seen it. Felt it.

Shifting as I stepped forward, I ignored the monarchs that howled. I ignored the sounds of heavy feet, claws and wings, as they rushed towards me. To stop me from what I was about to do. I ignored Nectar who screamed out in agony, rushing into the pool of water towards us.

"But you're the one who wrote the first page of that story," I said... and then stabbed my fist into Lapis's chest, and grabbed her heart.

Chapter 539 A Dead Kingdom

Walking through the empty streets, I dragged the large bag of hearts and other items I'd gathered over the last few days.

The Blue Nation was still here. But it was fading. Breaking. The picture perfect sky up above was cracking, revealing the real sky beyond it. What had been a bright sun high overhead was now a dim ball, sloping and falling, and all around it were holes and cracks as if in a glass pane. Between those holes and cracks I could see the starry night of the real sky. One with clouds.

I knew soon, maybe in a few days, the sky would completely crumble away. And once it did, most if not all of this nation and its contents would do the same. Some things might linger and remain, like certain buildings, or some of the crops, but most would just... shatter and fade away. Much alike a dirt mirror breaking apart into pieces.

"She had called it a Keep," I whispered.

That had likely been the spell's name. The one that had made this place. A fitting and apt description, to say the least.

If any of this place survived it'd make for a good hideout. It was so far from any other civilization, so hidden in such a deep forest that it was perfect for a place of solitude. Though what I'd use it for was beyond me. It wasn't as if I needed such things anymore.

"Though I suppose I do now have a bunch of hearts..." I mumbled as I glanced behind me at the bag I was dragging. The thing was leaving a trail of wetness behind it. The damned heart that had been spilling out that lifeblood was no longer spewing glowing blue water, but it still kept leaking water all the same. It seemed, and tasted, like plain fresh water at least.

There were twenty seven so far. I knew for sure there were more elsewhere. I had killed the monarchs that had been in the keep, and a good number that had charged in after the deed had been done. They had sensed their god's death, and had acted appropriately as they tried to exact vengeance.

Yet I knew not all had tried to get revenge. I remembered the large bull that I had seen earlier, pulling a wagon. I had yet to encounter that one yet.

My plan was to scour the area for a time, picking off the monarchs that likely tried to hide or flee. With the barrier breaking it was likely they'd be able to escape, given time and effort, but I was sure I'd be able to track them all down easily enough.

Especially with her help.

Looking up at my friend who flew over me on high, I wondered how long she'd been looking for me. I had killed Lapis at least half a day ago, but I figured Miss Beak hadn't entered the barrier until it had started to break down. That had likely not started until a few hours ago, I'd think.

I waved up at her gently as I stopped walking. I was in the middle of a bunch of large shops, but the road was wide enough that she had plenty of room to land comfortably so I decided to wait for her here.

Dropping the bag for a moment, I sighed as I rolled a shoulder and glanced around.

There weren't any bodies around here. None I could outright see, at least.

Likely because I had killed Lapis in the middle of the night. When they had all been at their homes, not at their workplaces.

How many had she said...? Two and a half million...?

I shivered at the number, right as Miss Beak landed a few dozen feet away from me.

"Vim..." Miss Beak's voice sounded tired as she looked around and folded her wings.

"Hey."

The huge monarch towered over the buildings, and I watched as she with a heavy eye studied our surroundings.

I knew she had likely seen all the corpses already. She had undoubtedly flown over not just this capital, but the whole surrounding area while searching for me.

"Are they all dead, Miss Beak?" I asked.

"Yes... Even in the far distant villages, there's not a one alive... what had happened? Had she used some kind of ability to cause this? In an attempt to stop you?" Miss Beak asked.

"Well... No. Or yes, in a way. Her name had been Lapis. She had empowered this nation's water supply with her power. To enrich the crops, or the soil maybe. Well... I had thought it would have meant the people would have suffered famines and chaos, losing their source of support, but obviously she had meant something a tad more serious," I said.

The tale has been stolen; if detected on Amazon, report the violation.

"Vim...!" Miss Beak said my name, rather loudly. Loud enough to make me flinch.

"Yes...! Yes. I know. I should have realized it. But I mean... gods always say such things as I'm about to kill them!" I said.

"And for once they had been honest..." Miss Beak groaned.

I huffed at her. "Even if I had known it would have ended like this, I'd still have done it," I said.

Miss Beak's feathers ruffled angrily. "By killing her, you killed them. All of them," she said.

I nodded. "All but the monarchs, oddly. I've dealt with all the ones I've seen so far, but I know there are more around here. I'm glad you're here, your wings will make the search a lot easier," I said as I gestured to the bag.

Looking up at my friend, I wondered why she wasn't saying anything. Usually right now she'd complain over how many hearts I was making her eat, or maybe how she wanted to go home already. Instead she was just... staring down at me.

Staring at me in a way that... well...

"What?" I asked.

She still said nothing, opting instead to blink at me. A look of pure pity was plain on her face, and it almost made me snarl at her. Why was she looking at me like that?

"What? What is it? Going to yell at me for ending a god? You know why I do what I do. You know why I have to. Even if it hurts. Even if it... does this," I said with a gesture around me. Was she going to say this was all my fault? That I shouldn't have done it?

"Vim..."

Gosh she was going to, wasn't she! Since when had she been so gentle? How many gods and monarchs has she helped me slay over the years? How many thousands, if not millions, have we displaced and

likely gotten killed much the same way as here and now? Servants, slaves, loyal cultists... Nearly every god had such people under them. If not as citizens of their nations, then as believers of their faiths. Or servants of their monarchs! This was just normal!

"Don't get all sentimental on me, Miss Beak... You know what's at stake!" I said.

Miss Beak didn't flinch at my shout. Instead she simply stared down at me, much as she would a child throwing a tantrum.

Even if I was one, that didn't give her the right!

"Vim... look there."

I glared at the huge pink-feathered headache for a moment, and then turned to follow her beak. It took me a moment, but I found where she wanted me to look. One of the shops, across the street, had a pair of bodies right in front of it. Judging by the angle of where they had fallen, and died, they had just been leaving it.

It had been a mother and a daughter, by the looks of it. Ones with little white wings on their backs, ones too small to fly with.

My jaw clenched as I stared at them, and then shook my head and looked away. "Yes, Miss Beak... they're dead. For allowing a god to lure them into reliance. They died for trusting a god," I said up at her.

Miss Beak inhaled deeply, sucking in a lot of the air around us. Then she released it with a deep sigh, one that expunged air so hot it dried the skin. "Vim... I've always supported you. Gods, typically, are cruel. And thus your ire for them is usually justified... but this?"

"Now listen...!"

Miss Beak didn't. "What word describes this, Vim? Other than cruelty? In what way is what you've done any different than what they do that you justify your vengeance with? Cannot others now not do the same for you? Are you now not just another god of cruelty yourself?" she asked.

I opened my mouth to shout at her, to argue, but hesitated.

She shook her mighty beak, rather slowly. "Ponder what you've done, Godslayer. I'll let you be. Hunt the remaining monarchs on your own two feet. Maybe the many miles and years it will take you to accomplish it, all the while traversing through a carcass filled desolated kingdom of your own making, will help you find the wisdom you left behind so long ago."

Then without waiting for my response she unfurled her mighty wings and flapped them a single time. I didn't flinch as I was hit by the huge gust of wind that propelled her upward and into the sky.

Glaring up at her, I watched her fly upward. To the cracked and broken sky high above me.

"Miss Beak!" I shouted at her, finally finding my voice. But it was too late. She wasn't just too far to hear me... she had already long since made her decision.

Being abandoned in this way was a first, and I had no idea how to handle it. Especially since... well...

Something splashed beneath me. I glanced down, and frowned at the water.

I had been standing on one of the thin aqueducts. That had carried the so-called lifeblood water. It of course was no longer glowing. Now it was just normal water. Fresh water, in fact.

The paved ground had crunched a bit from my weight, making my foot sink into the ground and ruin the aqueduct. Beneath me weren't the only holes or signs of destruction either. A nearby building was crumbling, and a distant hill had appeared in the middle of the road. Bricks and dirt were falling all over the place from it. Obviously while Miss Beak and I had our little spat I had lost control over my abilities. Water was pooling in the small hole I'd just made, soaking my boot in the process.

Taking a deep breath... I just stood there. Staring at the normal water pooling at my feet, water that had once been divine.

Two million plus souls.

Happy people, if but simple. Living their lives to their fullest.

People I even knew.

Marie. That happy-go-lucky girl who liked to slack off. Nectar and her family. A woman who had been loyal to me for centuries, as had her father. I had left her body floating in that pool of water and blood.

Other commanders, and who knows who else who had found their way here throughout the years...

Humans and non-humans alike.

Looking up, to the broken sky... I watched Miss Beak fly out of one of the massive cracks. She disappeared into the night sky, leaving me alone under the fake day one.

Leaving me alone in a kingdom of death, where I belonged.

Chapter 540 Millions of Deaths

Stepping up onto the little beach, I trudged through the sand... until I stood before my friend.

One I'd not spoken to in decades. The longest I'd ever gone without speaking to her, ever since meeting her.

Stopping before her pool of crystal clear water that she waded in... I dropped the small bag of objects I'd brought with me. Half of the bag I planned to have her burn to ash, to destroy for me. The other half I planned to leave with her, for safekeeping.

And... then I dropped to my knees.

My tongue felt fat and numb, as I tried to speak. To say the words I needed to.

I needed to apologize. To admit to my mistake. To tell her she had been right all along, and that I had been a fool.

Not only was it the right thing to do... it was what I needed to do to re-earn her friendship. So...

"Godslayer."

I flinched at her voice, and the name she had called me.

By my parents I hated that word. Despised it. Even if it was true.

Taking a deep breath I shook my head. "Worldbreaker," I said.

"Mhm... a better title, I suppose. What with what has happened. Not even I had foreseen the length of your mistake, Vim. Wish I had... I would have stopped you, instead of just berating you," Miss Beak said.

I wish she had.

"All you would have done is gotten yourself killed... I had been..." I said softly, shaking my head. I still hadn't looked up at her. I was too afraid to meet her eyes.

"Stupid? Indignant? Insufferable? Intolerable? Vapid? Thick? Dim?" Miss Beak began to rattle off everything I'd been and more.

I nodded gently, smiling softly at her as she did so. Her tone had softened since first greeting me. "Yes. All that and more."

"Hmph... and now you're depressing. Come now, Vim, get up."

"I'm..."

"Apologizing...? Yes. You just did. And did it well. I accept. You need not wallow like that, it's beneath you."

Actually it wasn't at all... but okay. I didn't get up though; instead I just looked up and finally met her eyes.

"I broke the world," I whispered.

"You did. Mightily so, too. I'm honestly not even sure how you accomplished it, to be honest... but so it has happened. I believe you called such an era, a dark age?" Miss Beak asked as she went to peck at some of her feathers.

I smiled gently at that. "Yes. Dark ages. Though not the exact way I'd describe it, or the proper term, it does fit, I suppose," I said.

"It is kind of dark. No more electricity, for one... and now with so few people, there are nearly no cities anymore. None big enough to notice, at least. Makes flying at night time rather lovely, if I dare so say. Though I do sometimes miss the twinkles of your cities," Miss Beak said.

My toes clenched in the sand as I groaned and nodded. Yes... the world likely did feel quiet and empty right now.

Hard not to when it was so desolate. So... devoid of life.

The only thing I could reason for the world's current suffering was the fake world I'd broken. By killing Lapis, by ending her little dream of a world within a world, I had doomed the real one.

Her world had not faded. Not completely. And when it had mixed in with the real world, once the barrier had fully dissolved and disappeared, something... terrible had happened. The world had succumbed. To a terrible disease. One that killed crops. Poisoned waters. Made the very air toxic.

My only real theory, the only one I found believable, was that the waters Lapis had used to make her soil healthy and strong... had inadvertently given birth to a strange strain of disease. One that infected all other soils and crops, and had done so rapidly. It had spread all throughout the world in just a few years, and it had not done so gently.

The world had gone from tens, if not hundreds, of millions strong to probably less than a million in total. Non-human and human combined. And it was all my fault.

"I don't even know how it happened. I tried to fix it, once I realized what was happening... but by then..." I shook my head as I breathed a sigh.

"Too late. Yes. But fear not, Vim. It is already running its course. Fields of grass are already returning, and as such so too are the life that live off them. A whole forest is nearby, I can show it to you," Miss Beak said.

I smiled softly and nodded. I believed her. I had seen it too on my way here. Life was indeed returning... just slowly. Very slowly.

"I broke the world," I said.

"Yes. But you've done so before. And many others have done so before you. Look at what my parents had done, Vim. Turned entire swaths of land into slag and molten lava! Yet now the places they had so destroyed are vibrant and full of life! Like my lovely flats here," Miss Beak said.

I'd not call these salt flats places abundant with life, but I understood what she was saying.

Given time... the world would heal. It always did, somehow.

"Nonetheless... because of my rash actions, I have brought a time of true suffering on the world. My mistake originally had been two and a half million lives. Now though? Now it is uncountable," I said.

Miss Beak scoffed at me. "Yes, such a disaster you are."

"I am. Have you seen the communities rebuilding, Miss Beak...?" I asked.

"Hm...? Yes? Is that not what I am saying? They're popping back up already. They're tiny, sure, but towns are indeed returning."

I nodded. I had passed through several on my way here. "One in ten children born, before I had killed Lapis, had lost traits. Traits. Singular traits, nothing more. Now...? Now one in four children born are human. Human entirely," I said.

Miss Beak didn't say anything for a moment, and I knew it was because she was pondering what I'd said. "You mean to say... human births are now prevalent?" she asked, understanding.

I nodded.

"That is not good... at that rate non-humans will be gone in no time at all. Mere generations," she said.

This novel is published on a different platform. Support the original author by finding the official source.

I nodded again.

Miss Beak inhaled deeply, and let out a deep hot sigh. It warmed my cold bones. "Well... I suppose it was bound to happen eventually," Miss Beak said, always one to find shelter in reason.

"Yes... but... I did it. I hurried it. I..." I couldn't find the words as I shook my head and looked down. My eyes began to burn as my own body resisted the urge to cry.

"Hm... Found your emotions again, I see. I'm glad for it, I suppose, but do not cry here. Also, why is your bag squirming?" Miss Beak asked.

I smirked and chuckled, since I knew she had only changed topics as to try and make me feel better. I sniffed and nodded and gestured to the bag. "One of the hearts produces a lot of water. I have it sealed in a way that keeps it from leaking, but it... well... wiggles," I said. It was in a pouch. A thin leather one made of god's skin.

"Want me to eat it? I'm ready for another. Since you've been neglecting me for years," Miss Beak said with a huff.

Slowly nodding, I coughed and then shook my head. "I do. There's a few hearts in there for you. But I uh... want you to save that one for last. It produces infinite clean water, drinkable water. That's... well..."

"Might be useful in a toxic world. Mind if I use it to replenish my lake then?" she asked.

"Sure. Go ahead..." I went to grab the bag, to drag out the heart.

Miss Beak stood, her feathers ruffling in happiness as I dug the god-pouch out and then opened it. I held it out, as it poured water all over, and Miss Beak quickly grabbed it with her beak.

I watched her happily dance for a moment and then go to put the heart in the center of her little lake. She submerged her beak deep into the water, and likely the sand beneath it, burying it there.

It would be safe there. She would basically be sitting on it the whole time.

"Thank you," she said happily.

I nodded. "You'll have to make little paths for the excess water to leave, once it floods enough," I said.

"You can do so for me," she said simply.

Another smile planted itself on my face... and I nodded. "I'll do so before leaving then," I said.

"Hm... and where do you plan to go now? Going to go try and save people? Build another nation, mayhaps?"

"Actually... I think I'm going to take a vacation."

"Vacation...?"

I nodded. "Not sure where I'm going to go yet... but I need some time to think. I'm... I did something terrible. I need to sort myself before I make a similar mistake again," I said.

Miss Beak huffed at me. "I wanted you to regain your gentleness, but that's a tad too far I think. How about you just go hunt a monarch or something? Or go find a mate to enjoy for a while?" she suggested.

I scoffed at the idea of a mate. Though did like the idea of a monarch hunt. "That's what I'd been doing, Miss Beak. Since I have no wings, it had taken me years to track them all down," I said with a gesture to the bag.

"Hmph... where's the rest, then? Can't be more than a dozen in that bag," she asked.

"Sealed away. You can't eat them all at once, so," I said with a shrug.

For a moment Miss Beak was silent, and then she reached forward. I closed an eye as she brushed her beak against the side of my head. It was hard and cold. "You sound defeated, Vim," she said.

"I am," I said. By my own hands, no less.

"I see. Then go on then. Return when you need me, or just want to talk. Don't mope around here, you'll just make me want to set you on fire and warm you up," she said.

Smiling at that I nodded. "Right..." I stood, to deal with the bag's contents and then figure out how to properly prepare her little oasis for the unlimited water it was about to hold.

While I rummaged with the bag, preparing to give Miss Beak the hearts she could eat over the next few years and to get ready to bury the rest nearby as to keep it safe until I came back, I sighed as I pulled out a book.

Right. I wanted her to burn this.

"Actually... can I have your fire, for just a moment, friend?" I asked as I stepped away from the bag.

"Hm...? Want me to actually burn you to a crisp? Now that I know I can evaporate my water and it'll all come back swiftly makes me more than willing!"

I laughed at that and shook my head. "No. I would like you to burn this, if you can."

"A book...? You? You want me to burn a book? Your mother would be ashamed!"

"Actually, she would. But for different reasons. This is my mother's. I had found it in Lapis's keep, her bedroom. Amongst other things..."

Miss Beak tilted her huge head at me. "That's your mother's?"

I nodded.

"And you wish for me to destroy it...?"

I nodded again.

"Why...?"

Because it hurt to hold it. To see it. To acknowledge and know the knowledge within it. And I couldn't do it myself.

"I can't destroy it. I don't even know if your heat will either, I'm just hoping it will. Your power isn't just potent, it's divinity. I don't have that," I said.

"I see... can I know its contents before I do?" she asked.

Hesitating a moment, I realized she did indeed have the right to know. After all, I was asking her to destroy it. That was a sin. So...

"It's the recipe," I whispered.

"Recipe...? For what?"

"Their gate. For them to return home, from whence they came," I said, and my eyes blurred a little as I did.

Miss Beak's huge head tilted as she studied me... and then she made a sound with her beak as she opened and closed it really quickly. "That's... very special, then isn't it?"

I nodded, my throat felt thick and heavy. I wasn't able to speak at the moment.

"Should we burn it, Vim...? What if you need its information one day? You forget things, sometimes. And I'm not really good with words."

"I'll..." I started to speak, but my words got stuck. I coughed and breathed in, slightly ashamed that I was about to weep. I shook my head, and blinked away tears. Forget this...? Impossible. How could I do such a thing when it will haunt my mind's every waking moment for the rest of my life?

It took longer than it should have for me to get control over my own emotions, as I gulped down a heavy emotion. "I'll not forget this. Trust me," I finally got out.

"Hm..." Miss Beak hummed gently at me, and I knew she could tell the truth. She knew me so well, and was so very wise... I just knew she saw through me. "Okay... Vim, I'll do it."

Blinking tears I nodded. "Thank you."

Very carefully Miss Beak lowered her beak once more. She grabbed the book from my hand, and did so with such gentle surety it made me feel weird. Why was she treating it as if it was a priceless treasure?

"I'll burn it in the sky. Away from here. In case I need to use my full heat," she said, still holding the book at the edge of her beak.

I nodded. "Thank you. I'll... finish up here and then leave. I'll be back, someday, after I... well..."

"Get over your moping. Yes. Please do. Your tears stink, Vim, stop it." Miss Beak teased me as she unfolded her wings and stood up fully. She was about to fly away, as to fulfill the task I had asked of her.

She really was a good friend. Not only was she loyal, she was willing and able to point out my own mistakes and flaws. To argue with me. I wished I had more like her.

I had though. In that nation I had built. I had abandoned them.

"Will you be here when I return?" she asked, snapping me from my thoughts.

Smirking at her, I shook my head. "Sorry. Probably not. I'll handle this stuff and then go... Goodbye, Miss Beak."

"Mhm. Stand Tall, Vim... you've made a mistake, but you can fix it. You always do."

I shook my head gently as I went to finish dealing with the bag, so I could leave.

"Not this time, I fear. Not this time..."

And not just because I had brought the world to its knees.

I had not just inadvertently killed millions of people... I had done something far worse.

And I had done it without even knowing.

Done it before I had even been born.

And the fact such a thing bothered me more than my killing millions of people made me sick to my stomach. Made me feel like a monster.

It proved I was broken. That I'd become callous and ruthless. That I'd lost the very thing my parents had instilled in me.

So I needed... to step away. From everything. From everyone. Not just to clear my head, to fix myself, but to keep everyone else safe. To keep myself from doing more harm.

Miss Beak had suggested, off-handedly, that I should go help the remaining survivors of this crippled world. And I should. I could help them. I could help them just as I had so many before, when the world had been broken like this before thanks to the gods and their attempts to kill me.

But if I did such a thing right now...? While I was broken...? I'd just inadvertently do more harm than good. I knew it. Miss Beak knew it. The world knew it.

So instead... I'll just leave.

Maybe I'll go for a swim.