

Essence of Time - The Forgotten Journey

Von Deamond

Kapitel 10:

Chapter 10

“Come on!!! Hurry!!” Shade shouted from afar towards the three running men. Zeyir was already exhausted, Allen was close to collapsing and Callo had a hard time keeping up with Shade’s pace due to the numbness that slowly started spreading inside his right body-half. The hit from Sparkle must have been a real bad one... But they did not dare taking a break. First of all because of the shadow-spirits lurking around here... They seemed pretty mad! Shade tried her hardest to keep them calm but if they dared stopping they sure were going to attack! But what pushed them even more was the sound of steps echoing through the cave. Someone was following them and even though they could not see who it was Callo knew who it had to be...

“Hurry up! They will catch up with us in no time!” Callo looked around. “Shade! How far till we reach the exit!?”

“We are half-way through!” Sade chirped, trying to cheer them up a little... without success.

“Only half through!?” Zeyir gasped and shot the Spirit an unbelieving glare. “You are kidding, right!? We can barely keep walking! I need a break!”

“It can’t be helped now!” Shade complained while taking a look around. “Maybe... no that is too risky...”

“What is too risky?!” Allen demanded between gasps. “What is... too risky?”

“I could ask the other Shadow-spirits to attack the intruders... but as soon as some of them attack, the whole bunch of them will attack, and they won’t make a difference between friend and foe!”

“So they will attack us as well?” Callo bit on his lip, painful memories rising inside him... He received a nod from Shade. “Right, that really is risky...”

“Wait a second!” Zeyir stopped all of a sudden. “So they attack in groups whenever they sense a danger? And they attack only others or their tribe-members as well?”

"Only foreigners, but..." Shade was confused about the question and stared at the evilly grinning demon.

"That is the very same with werewolves!" He looked at the walls. Two small red slits watched him intensely. "During full-moon they hide in the forests to prevent victims but if someone dares interrupting them the whole tribe will attack! As soon as they start killing, they can't stop attacking anymore. They will kill anything around them!"

"And how is this supposed to help us!?" Callo asked frustrated, though he was glad they took a break from running right now... He leaned against Allen a little... he did not dare using a wall to take a break.

"Well... there is a trick to prevent them from attacking you! My father taught me this when I was younger... You have to use the shadow-seal therefore." Zeyir smiled and looked at the Spirits. "If we... combine our powers we should be able to use the shadow-seal for kinda the while down here, right?" He looked at Shade with hopeful eyes.

"Huh? Yeah, of course! This cave is filled with darkness... but that won't help!" Shade sighed. "Shadow-creatures can see through such seals without problem and as soon as the Moon-guards and their light-spirits show up our seal will be useless! They will see our shadows and know that we are there!"

"Well, the trick is to give them a stronger feeling of danger for something else but you! Dark spirits think of light as something dangerous, right? And if they show up with their light-spirits, your 'siblings' or whatever you call them will concentrate on them first... am I correct?" Zeyir's grin grew wider and wider and even Callo and Allen got his point now.

"They will help us with their very spirits!" The desert elf nodded towards his little friend.

"That's not even a half-bad idea... I doubt you would be able to out-run them anymore anyway..." She pointed downward the corridor. A small light was seen from afar. The Moon-guards were coming closer and closer...!

"Shut down the light now, Shade. And ask the others to attack as soon as they are close enough to reach!" Callo nodded towards Zeyir. "Good job!"

"Hey, am I dreaming!?" Zeyir poked Allen. "Did that old deathglare-king just... compliment me!?"

"Don't push your luck, demon!" The tan man growled. "As soon as the spirits start their assault, stay as close to the ground as possible!"

The other two men nodded and knelt down behind a large rock. Shade made the small light around her disappear and they remained in darkness. The little red eyes of the other spirits stared at them. The steps came closer and closer and slowly but sure they had the feeling as if the cave around them light up again...

Hundreds of small shadow-spirits hang down the walls like bats blinking constantly. Their small pointed fingers crawled into the walls trying to cover their lid-less eyes with their arms.

"Poor creatures..." Shade whispered... "Those are the weakest of us shadow-spirits... they probably won't survive for long in the light of the elves' spirits..." She closed her eye and leaned against Callow who comforted her a little with his still healthy hand.

"Shade, are you ready?" Zeyir asked the small creature next to him while preparing for the spell. The steps seemed so close now, it couldn't be more than 50 meter distance between them and the light was so intense that Zeyir had to get used to the light-conditions again first!

"Yupp!" She nodded and looked around. "Brothers and sisters! I seek your aid!" She shouted and floated up. She could see the Moon-guards now, lead by a familiar man...

"Shade!" Eron, the new leader of the Moon-guards prepared for battle, his spirit of light floating over his head. "Where is the traitor?!" He demanded from the small spirit in front of him.

"Was pretty obvious that you would take over for Callo, huh?" Shade grinned evilly. "You always wanted to become the next leader of the Moon-guards... too bad only that we were better than you!" She chuckled and pointed at the walls. "How about you meet my friends?"

Suddenly, all the shadowspirits on the walls looked down at the intruders, their eyes turning into small slits. A roaring yet shrill sound echoed through the cave and thousands of Shadow-spirits stared at the frightened Eron.

Zeyir used his seal in the meantime on Callo and Allen before making himself turning invisible as well.

It looked like a swarm of wasps, bats or wild black birds that flew directly towards the Moon-Guards. The Light-Spirits did their best to kill off as many of the small spirits as possible with their light-beams but it was just way too many!

"Stay down!" Callo shouted towards Allen and Zeyir while they covered themselves with their arms. Screams, the sound of breaking bones and running feet echoed above their heads.

Minutes passed and slowly... it turned silent again... The sound of swords and spears was gone...

"It is... over..." Shade whispered into their ears while staring at the battle-field in sadness.

Allen and Callo stood up again, holding against the empty walls as they could not see

anything in the darkness, before removing the darkness-seal from Zeyir. The demon looked up a little and stared at the black ground. A chill ran down his back.

"Let's... just leave it dark until we walked on a little... okay, Shade?" The demon looked up at the small spirit, receiving a weak nod.

"Why? What's wrong?" Allen was confused... walking in absolute darkness? What was the sense behind—"UAH!" He tripped back against the wall. He had just stepped on something... something soft, yet solid... He could hear liquid under his boots, dripping off of them with every step he took.

"I see..." Callo closed his eyes and sent a silent prayer to Sol for the souls of the fallen knights and spirits of this assault.

"Most of the Moon-guards retreated in time... but some of them weren't as lucky... and ... so many of my..." Shade sobbed a little before shaking her head. "No, it is alright... They did not lead a good life down here anyway... So it doesn't matter!" She looked at the others. "I will try to not light too much of the ground, okay?"

Without a further word they walked on through the dark cave.

After a couple of hours of mute walking, Allen suddenly broke the silence. "Those caves are giant! How many tunnels are there!?" He stared at the many corridors leading through the dark cave in awe.

"They lead through all of Yora!" Shade turned towards the human. "On the surface, light rules over Yora, but to keep a certain balance between light and darkness, the Great Mother Nocturne formed these tunnel-systems long ago." She giggled satisfied.

"Nocturne? Isn't that the very first Great Spirit of Darkness?" Zeyir asked curious. "She once was a demon-queen before turning her life into pure Mana! That was when she became Midgard's very first Darkness-Spirit!" Proud of his knowledge, the demon patted himself on the chest.

"The... very first Spirit? So... there were more than just one of them!?" Allen was surprised by that fact.

"Exactly. Sometimes even the Great Spirits die. Either through fights, or curses... After their death a new Great Spirit is elected. Either they chose a very mighty Spirit of the certain element or a dead demon or god that represents this certain element." Callo looked at his necklace for a second. "Sol was a god before sacrificing his life and turning into Light-Mana. He is the oldest of all Great Spirits as he is the only remaining Great Spirit of Midgard's birth." He shot a deathglare at Allen. "As summoner you are supposed to know such things!" He barked.

"Uhm... well..." Poor Allen did not know what to answer anymore... "Uhm... you said you met Shade down here the first time, right? How came you walked through these caves anyway?" 'Allen you are a genius! Awesome change of subject!' He mentally

chuckled.

"..." Callo shot him another deathglare.

"Okay, forget I asked..." 'Stupid dork...' Allen shook his head and rubbed his arm... "Oh, by the way. How are your injuries?" He gave Callo a concerned glare. A little surprised about the sudden question Callo had to smile.

"I will be alright." He looked at Shade. "How far until we reach the exit?"

"Only a few minutes!" The spirit giggled and flapped with her little arms.

"A few minutes? GREAT!" Zeyir chirped before fastening his pace. It took them only a few minutes to reach a giant room with a stairway on its sides, leading upward on the walls. Naturally grown crystals sparkled in the soft light coming from above.

"Isn't that..." Allen looked up in awe. A small waterfall was dripping cold water on the ground causing an echoing sound through all the room.

"Yes. This is where we first met!" Callo replied calmly before entering the stairs and walking upwards.

"Amazing..." Zeyir glared up. It had been a much shorter way through the cave than taking the long way over the surface. It took them only one day to reach this cave, in return it had taken over two night-marshes to travel over the sandy dunes...

"Don't let yourself get fooled. The stairway is really long..." Callo sighed from already thirty meters above their heads. Allen and Zeyir gulped but followed the desert-elf up the stairs.

Exhausted, hungry and tired they reached the top. A small way hidden behind some crystals lead them towards the small platform they had first met on.

"I won't move an inch anymore..." Zeyir gasped and jumped right into the small spring, refreshing himself. It had been too long for his taste since he took a bath last time...

"Yeah, I need a loooooong long rest now too!" Allen complained and sat down next to the water, taking a few nibs from the refreshing liquid. Callo watched them silently while leaning on the stone-wall far away from the two of them.

"Hey, Callo. What are we going to do now?" Shade leaned on his master's shoulder.

"I don't know... I'm sorry to drag you into this, Shade..." Callo sighed and closed his eyes. "We can't stay in the desert anymore, but... I've never been outside of Yora..."

"Why don't you come with us then?" Callo opened his eyes at the sound of Allen's voice right in front of him.

"What did you just say?" Perplex, Callo was not sure what the human had just tried to ask him...

"You can't return to your tribe because you helped us and you don't look as if you are used to the life of a nomade. Besides..." Allen grinned. "We need someone with your fighting-abilities!"

"Yeah, you are a really awesome fighter! You are nearly as good as I am!" Zeyir shouted chuckling from the spring.

"Repeat that again, unworthy fry!" Callo could not hold back a smile though. "Guess... we have a deal then!"

"Great! As newest member of our party, it is your task to cook for us, okay?" Zeyir hopped out of the water, shaking the water off a little before walking towards their newest companion.

"Hmpf!" Callo shot him a death-glare.

"You have no clue what you have just done..." Shade giggled evilly and disappeared into darkness.