

Essence of Time - The Forgotten Journey

Von Deamond

Kapitel 14:

Chapter 14

It had been five days by now since Steel had joined the team. Shade really started to warm up on him... They trained together all the time, combining their powers to new techniques. Allen kept watching the small spirits in awe all the time. He was always so surprised when they combined Mana to create something completely new!

"Nightsteel!" Both small spirits shouted while concentrating on a small dagger Zeyir had offered them for practice-purposes. The steel of the blade turned black all of a sudden, the daylight mirrored like little stars on the metal surface.

"Wow, that's so great!!" Allen's eyes gleamed fascinated at the new-formed metal. He loved blades...

"Are you done now?" Zeyir and Callo shouted from afar, carrying some bottles with water they had refilled on a nearby river.

"Yupp, we did it!" Steel chirped happily. "Hope we didn't use too much of your Mana..." He added concerned and wanted to help Callo with the bottles.

"No, it's alright. Those techniques don't absorb much of my energy..." He smirked and handed over the bottles. "But in fact we were talking with Allen... Is lunch done now?"

"Yupp, I'm done... But this evening it is your turn to cook! Alright?" He grinned at the dark elf before his eyes wandered off at Zeyir.

"Hey, don't look at me that way! I haven't ever cooked myself in my whole life!" He waved with his arms hesitantly. "But I'm always willing to learn something new if you teach me..." He smiled and leaned forward, smelling on the awesomely looking food.

"Alright!" Allen grinned. "Hey, if I'm not mistaken, we will cross a river today. There is a ferry leading down-stream. That's exactly where we need to head to!" He smiled. "How much money do we have left?" He looked at Callo, a little embarrassed that they were depending on his wallet all the time...

"More than enough, Allen." He took out the pocket and showed them the filled wallet.

"I've got an idea..." He said looking from Allen to Zeyir. "How about we open a group-fond?" The dark elf waved with his wallet a little. "We take all our money together and if someone needs something he can pay for it from the group-fond."

"Sounds like a good idea to me..." Zeyir looked at the elf in irritation.

"Then it is settled." He said and threw the wallet towards Allen who caught it with ease. "Here, I trust you more than the demon..."

"Hey!" Zeyir barked, lolling out his tongue.

"Alright!" Allen chuckled and placed the wallet in his bag.

Allen had been right... After around an hour of walking they had reached a giant river running right through the plains beyond Mirror-Mountains.

"Wow..." Callo looked at the giant mass of water in awe. He felt a little sickness rising in his body as he watched the giant stream running down the land...

"Never seen so much water at once, huh?" Zeyir grinned and patted the former desert-inhabitant.

"Right..." Allen looked at Callo who grew a little paler at the thought of crossing this wild stream... "And I guess you are not very familiar with rain either, right?" Allen sweatdropped as the elf nodded slightly...

"Haha! This is going to be so much fun!!" Zeyir couldn't hold back his laughter.

After a few seconds of amusement though, they continued their way towards the ferry. The sun shone bright and the incidence with the shootingstar was almost forgotten by now... Callo had wondered about it and Zeyir and Allen had told him what had happened in Allen's homevillage.

As they reached the ferry and saw the little rafts standing around the little hut of the ferry-man, all three man gulped... Now even Zeyir and Allen had a bad feeling about traveling the wild river downward with those messy little bundles of wood knotted together...

"You are kidding me..." Callo stepped back a little... "I won't ride on those things!" He barked.

"Oh, don't tell me you can't swim!" Zeyir chirped in a honey drenched voice. A deathglare from Callo made him shut up though...

"Of course I can swim! But I'm..." He hesitated for a second. "I'm used to swim in a pool, I never swam in a river before!"

"Logical if you consider that you used to live in a desert all your life..." Allen scratched his goatee and entered the hut, not accepting any more complaining.

"Is he always like this...?" Callo muttered towards Zeyir.

"How should I know!?" The demon looked at the elder in confusion.

"You know him longer than I do!"

"Only about two or three weeks!" Zeyir barked.

"That's longer than I do know him even..." The elf hissed while following their human companion inside.

"Hello---o!" Allen greeted the ferry-man with an unnatural cheerful grin. "We'd like to ride down the river! As fast as possible... if possible..." He grinned and received an odd look from the old man behind the table.

"Three rafts... That makes 75 Gar..." The man, a tall feline in his sixties, stood up and went outside with them. His grey fur hang down his back while his white ears and tail matched awesomely well with the white shirt and trousers he was wearing.

"You are from the Cat-tribe, right?" Zeyir looked at the man with gleaming eyes. He had never seen a feline before...

"I prefer the name feline..." He looked at the demon curiously. "But don't worry about it... Guess we are rather rare in this area." The cat shook his head, waving his tail all around his body. "Just two days ago, a demon asked me the exact same question!" He mused the demon interested. "Well then... Do you want me to explain you how it works?"

"That'd be great..." Callo grew paler and paler...

"You don't have to be nervous at all. Those rafts might not look like it, but they are very solid and transported hundreds of other travelers over this river already." He smiled a little. The fur on his face went up and down with every word he spoke. Zeyir only watched in awe how the ears turned with every little sound of the surroundings...

"Stop acting like a dog!" Callo smacked the curious demon and listened to the feline interested.

"Well then... The stream is rather strong today, so you won't have much work just running down the river. You can steer with those long sticks by pushing them into the river's ground. Just watch out to not run into rocks."

"R..rocks!?" Zeyir and Callo both looked at the cat-man with doubled sized eyes.

"This is going to be fun!" Allen grinned. He and some youths from Ardon had always built little rafts to travel through the stream near their village. It had been his favorite free-time-activity when he was younger.

"You are kidding me..." Zeyir sweatdropped at the amused face of his companion.

"..." Callo gulped and took one of the long sticks. He and the others walked over to their rafts.

"Oh my unholy..." Zeyir stepped on one of the rafts. Even on the ground they looked as if they were going to break every second... Maybe those hundreds of passengers had been just way too much for them?

"Alright. Just ride down the river. You can't miss the goal... There is a long bridge that will catch you on your way. You can't miss it!" The feline smiled as Allen handed him over the 75 Gar. "Thanks. Pleasure to trade with you!" He waved with his tail and went back in to his hut.

"Let's go!!" Allen cheered and took one of the rafts, entering the landing stage. The other two men only looked at each other, nervousness written in their faces.

"..."

"What's wrong guys? This is going to be fun! Come on! Or is one of you too much of a coward to try it?" Allen grinned. Suddenly both men ran up to him, ready to enter the water. 'So I was right... They picked themselves as rivals...' Allen smiled at his companions. 'That's a good thing... That way they will grow on each other...'

"Alright, Allen? Shall we?" Zeyir grinned and placed his raft in the water, fixing it on the jetty until they were ready for take-off. The others did the same.

It was a strange feeling, especially for Callo to have the ground moving under his feet... Zeyir was somewhat used to it from dragon-riding and Allen... well, he was a pro. He stood on the raft as if it was solid ground...

"This... is great training!" Callo couldn't suppress a smile. He started getting a hang on it.

"Well then... if you are prepared, take your sticks and let's start!" Allen hopped up and down on his raft, causing Zeyir and Callo nearly falling off into the water... "Hehe... alright!" Allen pulled on a line that loosened all three rafts from the landing bridge.

They started downward the stream.

Callo and Zeyir both used mainly their sticks to steer but Allen 'surfed' on his raft, gaining double the speed than the others... He only used his stick when he came too close to a rock but more to push him off of the surface and jumping over the rock than riding around it...

"Hey! Allen! Wait for us!" Zeyir shouted from almost 30 meters behind the young human. Callo tried to gain some more speed to catch up with him and chain him to them with the help of Steel, but he was just not good enough in this...

"Come on... It's only a few minutes left until the stream runs quite again! Let me have some fun!" Allen yelled over his shoulder. The water was too loud to speak normally...

"Huh!? What is in a few minutes?!" Callo couldn't hear him between all the splashes... His ears were way too keen for this sort of thing...

"He said the river will run quite in a few minutes. He just wants to have some fun till then." Zeyir shouted towards Callo.

"Okay... How comes you can hear him!?" He looked at the demon in confusion.

"I can differentiate between water and voices!" He grinned evilly and pushed himself forward to gain some more speed, leaving the elf behind.

"Hey!!" Callo tried his best to get after them.

"Aw, man... over already..." Allen sighed as the others came closer in the quite water... The stream grew wider and the plains were even...

"..." Zeyir and Callo looked at each other... During their chase Callo had accidentally hit a rock and had to learn that swimming in a river was much harder than swimming in a pool... and to regain his raft, Zeyir had tried to catch it with his stick which had caused him to fall off of his raft as well... They had been lucky the stream had been rather shallow that spot...

"Hehe, you look so wet... What happened?" Allen asked sheepishly, well aware of what had happened... Shade had appeared next to him and had told him about their accident.

"And you think this was fun... huh?" Zeyir rose an eyebrow and stared at the dry summoner.

"Jupp!" He chuckled and sat down on his raft while pushing himself forward with the stick. Callo and Zeyir did the same. The stream had no more rocks here and even though the water seemed to be very deep here, it was a peaceful part of the stream...

Zeyir sat on his raft... and he grew visibly more and more bored...

Callo only stared at the giant mass of water. He had never seen this much water at once in his life...

Allen only looked up into the sky, watching the clouds as they passed by. Suddenly he caught himself humming a song his father used to sing all the time when they were

taking a ride on a boat...

"Row, row, row your boat..." He started singing a little, enjoying the moment.

"Hey, I know that song too!" Zeyir grinned from next to Allen. He looked at the desert-elf who was talking with Shade and Steel. "I got an idea..." He grinned evilly, pushing himself forward to gain some distance between himself and Callo.

"??" Allen watched the demon with interest.

"Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream..." The demon started singing, loud enough so that Callo could very well hear him... The tan man looked up from his conversation. "Throw the desert-elf over board and listen to his screams!"

"Roar! Just so you wait!" Callo shouted, pushing his stick harder into the ground to gain more speed. Allen held his belly laughing while Zeyir kept singing and speeding up at the same time...

It was night already as the small group of travelers arrived at their goal... The station was built near a small town on the river-side. Allen and Callo grinned at Zeyir the whole time cause... he was swimming... Callo had kept centering his raft with his stick every time he had re-entered his raft... and somehow he had given up and just swam after them while leaning on the raft only. The water felt warmer for him right now anyway considering that the air became cooler due to the night and he was all soaked...

"Come on, you were a worthy opponent." Callo offered him a hand grinning as he stood on the bridge already. He pulled the poor demon out of the water and gave him his dry shirt. Allen only chuckled and handed over his scarf.

"Tse..." Zeyir only hissed, but a small smile appeared on his lips...

"Take it easy, Zeyir... He's got over hundred years more experience than you!" Allen grinned and dodged a flying knife. "But hey, Callo! You are really lucky! Seems as if we are going to stay in an Inn tonight... guess you won't have to cook this evening." Allen smiled.

"Tse, you are the lucky ones..." Shade appeared and muttered under her breath so no one else was able to understand her...

"Let's go already, I'm tired..." Zeyir yawned from under Allen's scarf. "Swimmin'all the way is so haaard..." He tried to sound like a little kid and received a chuckle from Allen as reward.

"Alright, let's go..." Callo scratched the back of his head. Zeyir was using his shirt for warmth, so he gained the attention of many women around... but he didn't even notice... Allen shook his head and walked towards the marketplace for the search of an Inn.

Followed by his companions, the human entered a neat-looking Inn with restaurant. While he booked the rooms, Callo and Zeyir brought their bags to their new rooms already. They shared a giant room with three divided parts, one bed in each part. Zeyir took the bed closest to the door while Callo decided for the one on the end of the room with a window above it. He looked outside as it slowly started to rain. Small drips fell against the pure glass.

"..." Zeyir watched the elf. "The rains in Yora were different, right?" He leaned his head aside and mused his companion. He was still wearing Callo's shirt.

"Yes... I've never seen such a weak rain... when it rained in Yora it was only for very short but then so strong it destroyed all our crops..." Callo threw himself on the bed, enjoying his first soft mattress since over a week...

"Galdor uses to be a desert-land as well, but the capital doesn't face this problem... Three streams that run all over Utgard cross each other in the center of the dark capital and form a large river that leads right into the ocean. Our people plant their crops all around this stream and send it to the poorer areas of our country! My family used to..." Suddenly Zeyir cut it off... "Uhm, I mean we helped to send the crops all over Galdor too. But I never ever crossed that stream with a raft..." He chuckled at the memory... somehow he enjoyed doing these kinds of things...

"I see. So you must have a lot of bridges leading over it." Allen stood in the opened door and looked at his companions curious. No one had noticed him entering...

"Yeah." Zeyir nodded and hopped up. "I need something to eat... let's go to the restaurant as long as they are still open!" He grinned and wanted to run towards the kitchen.

"Stop!" Callo barked from his bed.

"Hm?" Zeyir returned a little confused.

"Dress yourself something dry and leave my shirt here!" He pointed at the white fabric.

"Oh, right!" Zeyir smiled and took it off. He also returned Allen's scarf and changed his top.

"Alright, are you coming too?" Allen looked at Callo who only shook his head. Shade was already floating next to him, her game-box in hands.

"I promised her a game." Callo grinned and waved as they left the room.

Down in the restaurant, Allen and Zeyir had enjoyed an awesome meal... Grilled chicken with fresh salad, pineapple, roasted hazelnuts and as desert vanilla ice-cream with hot raspberries.

"I'm so full..." Zeyir patted his belly, grinning satisfied. "I can't eat anything anymore..."

"Me neither..." Allen sighed heavily and looked outside the window... rain was still falling against the window. He watched as people crossed the street in a haste to go back to their homes... small lights lit the streets... white light... there was one white light... Allen blinked for a second. A woman with a wand had summoned light around her staff and walked down the road along with another woman... Allen shook his head and looked at the spot again. They were gone.

"You alright?" Zeyir sighed from his seat while staring at the roof.

"Y... yeah... It's nothing. Let's go. Must be hallucinating..." He yawned and went up to their room along with Zeyir.