

VI – Anu

„This will bet he last time and you will be the last mortal whom I will speak to. I am no longer among you. Farewell.”

The rift closed behind him with a soft sound, shutting down his last tie to the mortal world. So here he was. Finally at home, back with his own race. The picture before his ancient eyes definitely woke old memories.

The white marble walls grew into the sky majestically, just like they had done back in the Lands. Runes of gold decorated the columns and arches that framed his path. They had kept the city as plainly structured as the other one, too. In fact, the ground plan looked perfectly identical to him. The only thing that he was missing were the stone statues of the High Council’s members. The streets were amazingly empty, leaving a bad feeling in his gut. Had he picked the wrong hour for his return? Had anything unpredictable happened?

Shaking his head slightly, Anu decided to check on the rest of the city first. It was the most logical thing for a guardian to do and he had always been one. This overwhelming feeling, this nagging desire to make sure everything was alright had accompanied him since the dawn of time. It was an innate feature of his and at the same time a kind of responsibility that the rest of his people had been lacking.

They had not cared when Belial had interfered. The very first day Belial had descended from the city to seed hatred in the hearts of innocent mortals had been a crime and Anu could well remember his own anger that came with the knowledge of this crime. And what had the others done?

Nothing.

Even now, at the end of time, after the defeat of Belial and Anu’s return into the timeless realm of immortality, the thought still infuriated him. Why make up rules, if no one watched whether they were followed? Why call something a crime, if no one named a punishment?

What was even worse than that, they had played along. Yes, a game it had been to them. They – including all the members of the High Council – had watched the whole disaster for the first months, amused and satisfied with a change in the eternal flow of an immortal life. They had simply watched for months. Months that may have seemed seconds to a god, but also months in which thousands of innocent Hulines had been slaughtered out of spite.

It had taken him way too long to wake them from this blood drunk slumber. And even then, all they did was politely asking Belial to stop, not willing to risk anything more than scornful laughter.

And this was the moment he lost it.

Among all the things he had ever done in his life, Anu considered no action as rightful and just as providing these poor Hulines with a means of defence. Although it pained him to break the rules, it pained him even the more to sit and stare. Now – after all those eras – looking back on his life, he did not regret it at all. If there was any deed he would ever be proud of, he considered it likely to say it would be this one. Of course, the others had seen things from a different perspective.

Simply speaking, they did what was most convenient for them. Belial would be gone, the mortals would adore them for their help and none of them would have any blood or dirt on their hands. Convenient indeed.

He had to admit he had never been able to shake this feeling of guilt off himself. he had killed. Not murdered, but killed. Which was enough already.

It could have ended them. All bills were paid, according to the High Council. They could have left together, hadn’t he insisted on having someone stay and watch out that Belial’s plan would never work. Naturally, they chose the one who had just loaded a new burden of crime onto his shoulders.

How convenient for them...

By that time, he was already used to such behaviour. It was frightening to admit that, but their decision neither surprised nor irritated him. Someone HAD to watch and if he was supposed to be that one, then so be it. Maybe it was better that way. He had learned not to trust anyone but himself in terms of accurate justice anymore.

THAT was irritating him. He had lost confidence in his own people. All his trust and former feelings of unity were gone. He had irreversibly become an outsider, not by their law or his actions, but simply through a course of fate over a certain time. Gods were supposed to be immortal beings, wise and fully enlightened and thus never changing in all eternity.

But he had changed.

Did that make him less of a god?

“Anu? Anu is it you?”

His attention was drawn back immediately. Anu. It had been ages since someone had called him that. “Sire” and “Draracle”. These were the names that he had gotten used to. Surprised he could even remember his own old name, Anu raised his head to look at whoever had called him.

He noticed instantly that it was Ganesh, one of his old friends and the creator of the Thomgog race. A very strong, but diplomatic character himself, Ganesh had insisted on taking personal responsibility for the creation and teaching of this race. “Greetings, Ganesh. it does good to see you well and this city not completely deserted.”

“Deserted?” A chuckle left the god’s mouth as he approached his friend. “Oh no, Anu, you just picked the wrong hour to join us again. The council had just summoned us for a vote. We just finished. But enough of that! It is good to see you. 26 eras it has been! Your return is worth celebrating.”

“It doesn’t seem as if much has changed.” The Draracle answered simply while Ganesh led him through the streets, every now and then pointing at a home to tell him about its inhabitants.

“That is correct. You know the way it goes, Anu. Morning, night, everything repeats itself. The only difference was that you were not here. You might have noticed we built the city again just as it had been before.”

Sighing faintly, Anu looked at the house they had arrived at. “Including my former home, as I see.” Not waiting for an answer, he stepped through the gate into the hall, It really was his own house, as it had been. Of course, it was missing all the little trinkets that the Hulines had presented to him ages ago and that he had kept for reasons he couldn’t explain to himself. Now, blank as the rooms were, they looked cold and dead to him. This was not his home anymore.

“So, I assume Belial has been defeated?” Ganesh finally asked, his small, brownish frame not even filling half of the doorway. “Did you have to do it yourself?”

“Are you thinking of reporting to the High Council or is this a simple conversation between friends?” Anu interrupted him quickly, while shaping the walls until they resembled the relieves of the walls back in the cave on the Northern Continent. He couldn’t really explain why, but the whole room made him feel sad. It was so cold. So impersonal. So completely standardised. How could he have lived in something like this for millennia? it needed more light. Not the bright light of the Gods, but “mortal light”. Candles, torches, anything. It needed colour and decoration and most of it all: sound. It was quiet as a grave and the silence seemed to crush him. He had been wrong. He wasn’t home now. He had left home and exchanged it for the unknown, the unfamiliar. He had left behind two lives. One more than 26 eras ago and one just now. He was starting from scratch and he doubted anyone here would understand him. They were not like him. He was not like them.

“My apologies, Anu.” Ganesh finally replied in a low voice. “I did not mean to make this sound like an interrogation. I am just curious.”

A short smile flickered across the Draracle's lips. "It was a mortal named Scotia, a human woman, who woke Belail by using the Nethermask for her evil purposes. And it was her own son, Luther, who defeated him. Luckily, he dispensed with his powers voluntarily." His thoughts wandered back to Gladstone for a moment. Right before he had left, Copper LeGre had told him about open portals. Had he managed to close them? Was Gladstone safe now? Was everything alright in the mortal world?

"You are missing that world, are you not?" Ganesh asked calmly. "I see your thoughts still linger on that plain of mortality."

"I spent 26 eras there, Ganesh." The Draracle replied. "26 eras under completely different circumstances can change a person. Even a god."

"Then I guess we have to change the definition of this word." Ganesh replied joking. "But if it is the mortals you are missing, then I believe I might just have good news for you."

Immediately, Anu's attention was back to full alert and he looked at his old friend. "I thought we were right on the other end of space and time?"

"We are." Ganesh reassured him. "But after the first 15 eras or so it got a little boring here in our galaxy. We decided to create a new planet and called it "Earth". We left it to itself and observed. Only a few weeks ago, nature blessed it with its first human inhabitants. The council met today to decide whether or not we may visit it."

"We may?" Anu guessed with a twinge of fear in his voice that even worsened when he saw Ganesh's face show a smile.

"Exactly. But do not worry, old friend. We are not going to make the same mistake twice."

He watched Ganesh leave again, then turned back to the relief on the wall. Gods were supposed to be immortal, wise, fully enlightened and thus never changing. Apparently, they weren't the second and he wasn't the fourth. He prayed they would not make the change Ganesh had proposed out of fun. If they did, he would by definition be alone.

Again.

