



THE CURSE OF THE BLOOD MOON
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****Prologue: Inflection****

The sky darkened under the fury of a storm that seemed unnatural. Intense red clouds intertwined with black shadows, as if hell itself had opened its doors upon the world. The wind howled with supernatural violence, spreading the scent of damp earth and the foreboding of death.

Suddenly, a heart-wrenching scream shattered the chaos of the storm, traveling across continents like an invisible wave that froze the soul of every living being. That voice, laden with profound pain, was not just the echo of a heartbroken mother; it was the prelude to a vengeance that would change the fate of the world.

It was the cry of Isolde, a sorceress whose ancient and powerful magic had remained in the shadows for years. Her daughter, Aveline, the light of her life, lay dead. She had taken her own life upon discovering that Dragan, the troll she loved with unwavering devotion, had been brutally murdered.

Isolde, consumed by rage and sorrow, felt her magic unleash with every tear that fell to the ground. The reddened sky was only the beginning of her wrath, and the curse of the blood moon would soon fall upon the world.



The tragedy that sealed the fate of Dragan and Aveline occurred in a single fateful day when the worst of the human world and the troll world came together in a despicable act. What began as a manifestation of hatred would soon turn into a cruel chain of events that would destroy not only two lives but also the fragile hope of reconciliation between two species.

Among the trolls, there were those who looked upon the relationship between Dragan and Aveline with disgust. They considered it unthinkable for one of their own to become involved with a human. For them, that union was an affront to ancestral traditions, something unnatural that needed to be punished. One night, under the dark mantle of the sky, as Dragan returned from a secret visit to Aveline, a group of trolls intercepted him. They attacked him mercilessly, delivering brutal blows with the intention of making it clear that he should not continue that relationship. They did not want his death, but rather a punishment that would mark him, that would subjugate him.

When the first rays of the sun peeked over the horizon, illuminating the vast landscape, Dragan lay unconscious in front of the entrance to his cave, where the shadow still protected him from the sun beginning to bathe the lands. It was at that moment that a group of young humans found him. They did not see Dragan as a living being, but as a monster with which they could have fun. They were well aware of the trolls' vulnerability to the sun, and in their cruel minds, that vulnerability was a perfect opportunity for macabre entertainment.



Without any compassion, they dragged Dragan away from the protective shadow, taking him to a vast open field where the sun loomed with all its power. There, there was no refuge, no shadow, only the harsh light of day that promised to be lethal for an injured troll. When Dragan awoke, he did so under an unrelenting sun that slowly burned his skin. Weak and in pain, he tried to stand up, but his legs failed him. The beating he had received had left him almost powerless, and the intensity of the sun rapidly consumed what little strength he had left.

With every movement, he felt his life slipping away. He knew he wouldn't get far, but still, he crawled toward a forest he could see in the distance. The heat of the sun was like torture, each inch he covered tore groans of pain from him. The human boys followed closely, laughing, mocking his agony. For them, watching Dragan struggle for his life was a game, a monstrous mockery of what they did not understand.

For almost an hour, Dragan tried to move forward, searching for the shadow that could have saved him, but the forest was too far, unreachable for his dying body. His breathing became heavier, his strength fading with every second. In his mind, only one thought accompanied him: Aveline. He wished with all his heart that she would continue her life, that she would not lose the joy that had always characterized her. His last wish was for her, hoping she would never find out what had happened to him.

And so, under the cruel sun, Dragan exhaled his last breath. The young humans walked away, leaving his body scorched by the sun, oblivious to the pain that their actions would unleash.



That night, Aveline could not meet with Dragan as usual. Since she opened her eyes that morning, an unusual unease had consumed her. Despite her attempts to distract herself, a dark shadow seemed to envelop her heart, making every second that passed without news of him feel like an eternity. The night before, after saying goodbye to Dragan, terrible nightmares had invaded her sleep, tormenting her mind and leaving her restless.

Dragan had not appeared, and his absence intensified the fears that had been haunting her throughout the day. She felt that something was wrong, as if fate was whispering to her from the shadows that something terrible had happened. The whispers of the wind, the creaks in the old castle, all seemed to announce tragedy.

Aveline was not an ordinary young woman; she was the daughter of Isolde, a witch whose magical arts were among the most powerful in the world. Although Aveline did not possess the same strength as her mother, she had learned the ways of the spiritual world, the rituals that opened forbidden doors to most mortals. Desperate to know what had happened to Dragan, she decided to delve into that dark knowledge.

In her room, located high in the castle's tower, she lit black beeswax candles and carefully traced the ancient symbols on the floor, surrounding herself with magical powders she had learned to handle under her mother's strict tutelage. The cold wind of the night began to stir the curtains as she whispered the sacred words, invoking the spirits that guarded the secrets of the beyond.



Suddenly, her eyes clouded, and her consciousness was pulled into a dark realm. What Aveline saw in that spiritual plane hit her with devastating force. Before her unfolded the vision of her beloved Dragan, kneeling, wounded, and bleeding on the ground. She saw him being brutally attacked by those she considered his troll brothers, betrayed by his own kind simply for loving someone of another species.

Tears began to stream down Aveline's face as the vision continued, relentless. Now she witnessed the cruelty of humans. A group of young boys dragged him out of his cave, laughing and mocking him as they took him to the open field, condemning him to a slow, agonizing death under the unrelenting sun. The pain in Dragan's face, his struggle to survive everything was unbearable to watch. His last thought was of her, of Aveline, and that shattered her spirit completely.

When the vision ended, Aveline returned to reality, gasping and broken. Her body trembled, and her mind fought to process the brutal truth of what she had witnessed. Dragan was dead. There was no way to save him. The agony she felt was like a knife piercing her heart, bringing her to the brink of madness.

Desperate, with no strength left to endure the pain that now consumed every corner of her being, Aveline stepped out onto the balcony of her room. The night loomed over her, and high in the sky, the Blood Moon shone with a supernatural intensity, a dark omen that appeared only once every ten years. It was as if fate itself was mocking her pain.



With her gaze lost in the deep red of the moon, Aveline understood that she could not go on. The world without Dragan was meaningless. Amid tears and sobs, she whispered her beloved's name one last time before throwing her body into the void from the top of the tower. The wind embraced her as she fell, and in the final moments, her mind emptied of all suffering.

Isolde felt Aveline's death the instant her life flickered out. The bond between mother and daughter, forged by love and magic, allowed her to perceive the last heartbeat of her heart. A sense of emptiness, more terrifying than any dark spell, seized her chest. Without wasting a second, she ran desperately through the castle corridors, searching for her daughter, knowing deep in her soul that something terrible had happened.

Upon reaching the courtyard, the world seemed to stop. There, on the cold stone, lay the lifeless body of Aveline. Her daughter, her light, her reason for living. The sight tore her soul apart. With trembling hands, Isolde knelt beside her daughter's lifeless form, gently lifting her into her arms. The warmth of life had already faded, and the coldness of death enveloped her. "No, no... this can't be happening..", Isolde whispered through sobs, her mind refusing to accept what her eyes showed her. "Why? Why?!", she cried to the sky, seeking an answer that would never come.



Desperate and filled with unbearable pain, Isolde made a swift magical gesture with her hands, invoking a spell that would reveal the truth to her. In the blink of an eye, images began to form in her mind, as if she were seeing through Aveline's eyes. She understood everything: the betrayal of the trolls, Dragan's brutal agony under the scorching sun, and the devastation in her daughter's heart as she witnessed it. She saw the moment when Aveline, unable to bear the pain, threw herself from the balcony, finding her end on the cold stones of the castle.

The vision faded, but the pain remained. At that precise moment, Isolde let out a scream so powerful that it resonated beyond the human realm. Her scream pierced the air like a sword, shaking the very foundations of reality. The sky, which had remained calm until then, transformed immediately. Storm clouds began to form, tinged with a devilish red and black, as if hell itself had broken loose upon the Earth. Isolde's fury was such that nature itself trembled under her power.

However, it was her second scream that unleashed the true nightmare. This scream was not just one of pain, but of hatred, of vengeance. It was a scream so chilling that every living being on the planet felt a shiver deep within their being. Animals, humans, trolls everyone felt the icy breath of death run down their spines, not knowing what had caused it, but instinctively understanding that something terrible was about to happen.



A gigantic lightning bolt tore through the sky, connecting the clouds with the earth. The lightning struck directly in the courtyard, at the exact spot where Isolde held her daughter's body. In that moment, she made her decision: trolls and humans would never be together again. The union between the two species, which had caused so much tragedy, had to be destroyed. Isolde would ensure that this curse lasted for all eternity.

The lightning extinguished as quickly as it had appeared, leaving the air charged with electricity. And when the light of the lightning faded, neither Isolde nor Aveline were there. They had vanished, consumed by the power of dark magic and the hatred that Isolde had unleashed.

Thus began the curse of the Blood Moon. A curse that would fall upon the world again and again, a cycle of revenge and pain that would repeat under each red moon, marking the fate of trolls and humans forever.



****Chapter 1: Hope is Born****

A thousand years after the curse of the Blood Moon was unleashed upon the world, on a warm summer night, Brynja, a young troll of just twelve years, wandered through the forest in search of wild berries for her family. The air was thick with the aroma of damp earth and leaves, and everything seemed calm. But as she picked the berries growing among the bushes, a sharp scream shattered the serenity of the night.

"Help! Please, someone help me!", a clearly human voice echoed from a distance.

Brynja stopped in her tracks. Her heart began to race in her chest. She had never seen a human up close, only heard terrible stories about them. Her parents had warned her that humans were dangerous, treacherous, and that she should stay as far away from them as possible. But the curiosity she felt, so typical of her youth, fought against those warnings.

"I'll just take a look... I won't get too close", she murmured to herself, as if saying it out loud would convince her that she was in no danger.

With cautious steps, she followed the direction of the voice until, among the trees, she found the source of the scream. There, on the ground, trapped between the roots of a fallen tree, was a human boy of her same age. His face was pale, and his expression of pain was unmistakable.

Brynja's eyes met his, and they both froze for a moment that felt eternal. They knew what it meant to come face to face. They were of opposing species, condemned by the curse to a perpetual enmity.



"Who are you?", the boy asked with a trembling voice, breaking the silence.

Brynja hesitated for a moment, but ultimately responded with the same shyness. "My name is Brynja. What happened to you?"

"I'm Roland... and... I fell between these roots. I can't get out. Please, don't hurt me," he pleaded, frightened but not showing hostility. "I just want to go home."

Brynja took a step back, torn between obeying her family's warnings or following her impulse to help him. She had never had a reason to distrust a human, beyond what she had been told. Roland didn't seem dangerous, just a hurt boy, trapped.

"I... won't hurt you," she murmured, making a decision. "Wait, I'm going to help you."

Carefully, Brynja approached and knelt beside him, observing how the roots had ensnared his leg. Her strong hands, typical of trolls, began to move the heavy wood that held him immobilized. After several attempts, she finally managed to free Roland.

"Thank you!", he exclaimed, relief in his voice, although when he tried to stand, his face twisted in pain. "My leg.. I can't walk."

Brynja watched him in silence, feeling a mix of pity and responsibility. "I'll help you get back to your village," she said firmly, even though she knew she was breaking all the rules her family had imposed on her.



"Why... are you helping me?", Roland asked as he leaned his arm on Brynja's shoulders to keep his balance. "My father always says that trolls hate us."

"My family has told me the same about humans," Brynja replied, walking slowly alongside him. "But I don't understand why. I had never seen a human until today."

"I've never seen a troll either... You're different from what I imagined," Roland confessed, glancing at her grayish skin and the small horns protruding from her forehead. "My grandfather tells stories about trolls, but... you don't seem like the ones in the stories."

"Stories?" Brynja smiled, though with a hint of sadness. "My mother says that humans are cruel and that they caused a lot of pain a long time ago. But you don't seem cruel."

"Maybe they only tell those stories so we don't talk to each other," suggested Roland, with a thoughtful look. "Perhaps... things aren't the way they used to be."

Silence fell over them as they moved through the forest. Their steps were slow but steady. Though they barely knew each other, the initial tension gradually dissipated, replaced by a strange yet comforting sense of companionship. Each had grown up with fears instilled by their respective families, but in that moment, the two children realized that what they had been taught might not be entirely true.



Upon reaching the edge of the forest, close enough to the human village for Roland to return on his own, they stopped.

"Will I see you again?" Roland asked, looking at Brynja with hope.

"I shouldn't..." Brynja looked away, knowing how dangerous it would be for both of them if anyone discovered their meeting. "But... I also want to see you again."

They both smiled shyly, aware that they had broken the first barriers that separated them. Their friendship, though forbidden, had just been born under the same stars that, a thousand years earlier, had witnessed a tragedy. Perhaps, within them, a hope was being born that the world had not known since then.

Years passed, and with each season that faded away, Brynja and Roland strengthened their friendship. Under the cover of night, they would meet in the same clearing in the forest, always in secret. They knew that a discovery of their relationship would be catastrophic, not only for them but for their families and their respective villages. However, the bond they had formed was stronger than the fear of being discovered.

Their conversations, which at first were shy and filled with uncertainty, soon became the most cherished moments of their days. In those shared hours, they were free to explore the depths of each other's worlds, discovering that despite being from different species, their hearts beat with the same curiosity and kindness. They laughed, shared stories about their families, and often marveled at how similar their worlds were, even though history had separated them.



"What is it like living in your village?" Roland asked one night as they lay on the damp grass, gazing at the stars. "What do trolls do for fun?"

Brynja laughed softly. "We... have fun in nature. My father always says that trolls should live in harmony with the forests, not dominate them. We spend a lot of time taking care of the plants and animals. It's our way of respecting the life around us."

Roland nodded thoughtfully. "My father, Baron Godwin, also believes in taking care of the land. He says that if we mistreat it, one day the land will punish us. That's why he has always been fair to the peasants and careful with the forests under his protection."

Brynja turned to him, surprised. "I never imagined a human would think that way. The stories I heard always said that humans destroy everything they touch."

"I've heard the same about trolls," Roland replied with a smile. "But after getting to know you, I know those stories aren't true."

They fell silent for a moment, listening to the soft whisper of the wind among the trees. Although they shared laughter and anecdotes from their lives, there was always a shadow looming over their conversations: the curse of the Blood Moon. That curse had condemned their two species to enmity, and no matter how hard they tried, they could not ignore the chasm that existed between them.



"Do you ever think about the curse?" Roland asked softly, as if mentioning the words could invoke its dark power.

Brynja nodded, her face serious. "Sometimes. I wonder why it has to be this way. What did we do to deserve this?" Brynja paused and added, her voice tinged with sadness, "My mother always says that the Blood Moon is a reminder that we must not cross certain boundaries. That we are destined to remain apart."

Roland looked at her with determination in his eyes. "Brynja, I believe together we can find a way to break it."

Brynja smiled sadly. "Really? I want to believe you, but sometimes the fear I feel because of it paralyzes me, and I can hardly breathe."

They both shared that burden, the duality of their relationship. On one hand, they felt immense joy in being together, sharing their worlds and dreams. On the other, they could not escape the sadness that came with the knowledge that their friendship, their connection, would always be marked by the curse.

But they knew their worlds were not as far apart as they had been led to believe.

Roland came from a respected family. His father, Baron Godwin, was known for his wisdom and justice. He was a beloved leader, one who prioritized the well-being of the people and respect for nature. Under his leadership, the village thrived, and Roland had inherited those same principles. He knew his life was destined to follow in his father's footsteps, to become a man who looked out for the well-being of his people.



Brynja, for her part, came from a small but close-knit troll family. Her father, Rundak, and her mother, Vilda, had always taught Brynja to respect the natural balance of the forest. Zugmar, the elder of her family, told her stories of the ancient wisdom of trolls, reminding her of the importance of living in harmony with the land.

Both families, although separated by species, shared a similar philosophy: respect for life and nature. But that invisible and silent connection was not enough to change the legacy of enmity that weighed upon them.

Roland gently and securely took Brynja's hands. He wanted his next words to be a balm that would ease the sorrow in Brynja's heart: "I swear we will find a way to break the curse."

That night, as the moon shone above them, they shared the hope of a different future. They knew that their friendship was a risk, but they also knew it was a risk worth taking.



****Chapter 2: Blood Moon****

Time marched on inexorably, and with each passing day, Brynja and Roland approached their twentieth birthday. Their friendship had evolved into an unbreakable bond, founded on absolute trust that no being or curse seemed able to shatter. However, despite the closeness they shared, the abyss of the Blood Moon curse loomed over them like the axe of an executioner, a shadow threatening to sever everything they had built together.

The curse, which had for centuries transformed trolls into fierce, flesh-hungry creatures, was imminent. Every time the Blood Moon appeared in the sky, the trolls lost control of themselves, becoming insatiable monsters. For hundreds of years, their people had tried to shut themselves away and protect the humans, but sometimes the inner beasts that emerged were too powerful to be contained. This curse had raised an insurmountable wall between trolls and humans, a barrier that even Brynja and Roland were unsure they could overcome.

"We have to face it together, Brynja," Roland said one night, his eyes filled with a mix of determination and desperation. "We can't let this tear us apart. If what we feel is real, we must overcome this trial."



Brynja looked at him with her heart in her throat. Roland's words touched the deepest part of her being, but the fear she felt was overwhelming. "Roland... you don't understand what you're asking. I won't be able to control it. If I hurt you... I would never forgive myself."

"And I would never forgive myself if I left you alone in this moment," Roland replied firmly, taking Brynja's hands in his. "We have overcome so much together. I don't want this to be what separates us."

Brynja's eyes filled with tears, but she nodded, knowing that Roland would not back down. "Alright. If you're determined, we'll do it. But only if you promise to take every precaution. We can't take any risks."

"I promise," Roland said, his voice soft yet resolute. "I will do whatever it takes to keep us safe."

Together, they chose a remote cave, far from any village or human settlement, where they could carry out their plan. Brynja insisted that Roland use strong chains to immobilize her during the process. "It's the only way," she said, her voice breaking as she imagined what could happen. "I can't allow anything to happen to you."



Although Roland's heart broke at seeing her chained in such a way, he knew it was necessary. Each nail he fixed into the chains hurt him more than any physical wound, but he did it without hesitation, for his desire to be by her side was stronger than his fear.

As the sun began to set and night covered the sky, the tension in the cave grew. Brynja could feel a dark energy starting to invade her body. The transformation was near. Roland, sitting beside her, looked at her with a mix of concern and hope. He knew he had to stay calm, he had to be her anchor, but he couldn't help but feel a rising fear.

"I'm here, Brynja," Roland whispered, taking her hand even though it was chained. "I won't let you get lost in this."

Brynja squeezed Roland's hand tightly, struggling against the rising wave of darkness that loomed over her. "I'm trying... Roland... but it's so strong..."

With each passing minute, Brynja felt as if a dark and wild force was taking control of her body, pushing her toward a bestiality she could not stop. Brynja's consciousness hovered on the edge of a precipice, watching as her own body surrendered to the most primitive and cruel instinct. She fought against that darkness, but her effort was in vain. It was like trying to stop the flow of a river with bare hands.



"Brynja, hold on!" Roland shouted, desperate as he watched his friend's eyes turn red, the unmistakable mark of the curse.

"I can't!" she screamed, her voice already transformed into a roar. "It's too strong!"

Finally, the dark force overpowered Brynja, and the only thing that stopped her advance toward Roland were the chains that held her. She roared and thrashed, trying to break free, but the chains, though strong, barely contained her fury. Roland stepped back, his eyes filled with tears at the sight of his friend transformed into an unrecognizable creature, but he refused to flee. He could not abandon her, not after everything they had been through together.

The night was long and agonizing. Roland spent every second with his heart in his throat, fearing that his friend would not return from that darkness. But when the first rays of sunlight began to peek over the horizon, the transformation came to an end.



When Brynja woke at dawn, the first thing she saw was Roland by her side, still vigilant, his face marked by sleeplessness and anguish. The chains that had bound her now hung loose, without tension, and she, exhausted and defeated, slowly sat up, her face covered in shame.

"Roland... I felt everything," Brynja murmured, her voice trembling. "I was aware of what I was doing, but it was as if my body no longer belonged to me. That... that darkness took control of me, and I couldn't stop it. I was just a mere spectator... of all the horror."

Roland knelt before her, gently taking her face in his hands. "It wasn't your fault, Brynja. I knew this would be difficult, but we overcame it together. And I promise you, we will find a way to break this curse."

Although Brynja nodded, doubts still lingered within her. How could two young people break such an ancient and powerful curse? The shame of what had happened, of having shown that monstrous part of herself to Roland, consumed her. She wasn't sure if she could ever move past that feeling.

But before she could say anything more, Roland surprised her. He wanted to dispel all the doubts of his beloved, and with a silent determination, he leaned in and kissed her. It was a gentle kiss, full of promises and hope, and in that moment, the spark of a deeper love ignited between them.

"We're going to make it, Brynja," Roland whispered, a smile illuminating his face. "Together. We will break this curse."



Together, they would embark on a quest to find a way to destroy the terrible curse that weighed upon their lives. They knew they had a hard journey ahead in search of the truth. Roland would delve into his research in the human world, where tales of ancient legends and the secrets of the elders might offer clues on how to break the curse. He would venture into forgotten libraries and meet with scholars, willing to risk everything for Brynja's salvation and their love.

Meanwhile, Brynja would do the same in the spiritual realm. She would explore the mysteries of her lineage, seeking answers among the echoes of her ancestors. The visions of her past might reveal to her the key to controlling the darkness that threatened to consume her. In every ritual, every invocation, she would feel Roland's presence close to her heart, giving her strength in her darkest moments.

It would be hard years of separation, filled with challenges and trials that would test their love and determination. But their conviction could not be stronger. With the spark of love guiding their steps, they knew that, although the path would be difficult, together they could overcome any obstacle and find a way to defeat the curse that kept them apart.



****Chapter 3: The Path to Truth****

The next ten years became a long and arduous journey for Roland. With the firm conviction that there was a way to break the curse, he began his research, traveling every corner of the kingdom in search of answers. The great libraries and abbeys, places where knowledge was guarded jealously, were his first destinations. However, he soon discovered that the information he sought was more difficult to obtain than he had anticipated.

Ancient documents about trolls and the curse were scarce, and those that still existed were filled with gaps, burned, or deliberately erased. Sometimes, the clues he found led him to dead ends, places where the truth had been lost to time or to the fear of the people.

"Why does no one want to talk about the curse?", murmured Roland, frustrated after another fruitless investigation at an abbey.

"Because the wounds it left are still open," replied an old monk with whom he had shared a cup of wine. "People fear trolls. And fear, young Roland, is not an ally of truth."

Despite the difficulties, Roland persisted. Sometimes, his research took him to darker places: taverns filled with smugglers, dangerous neighborhoods where legends about trolls were distorted and mixed with superstition. It was in one of those taverns, during a rainy night, that he encountered a drunken old man who seemed to know more than he let on.



"Listen to me, boy," said the old man, his tongue loosened by alcohol. "It's not just the trolls you have to watch out for. There are humans... who don't want the truth to come to light."

"What do you mean?" asked Roland, leaning closer, intrigued by the conspiratorial tone in the man's voice.

"Shhh," whispered the old man, glancing around before speaking more clearly. "There are forces, ancient forces, that would do anything to keep the world as it is... Beware of the symbol, young one. You will see it. And when you do... you will know that you are too close."

Intrigued by the old man's revelations, Roland decided to meet him the next day at his inn, hoping to unravel more secrets about the dark truth he had begun to uncover. However, upon opening the door to that room, horror paralyzed him. There, the old man lay crucified to the wall, his lifeless body hanging with a macabre serenity. On his chest, a strange mark was drawn with his own blood, a disconcerting figure that seemed to radiate a diabolical intensity in the dim light of the room.

The image sent shivers deep into his being. Roland tried to regain his composure, battling against the nausea that threatened to overwhelm his stomach. He looked around cautiously, searching for any sign that the danger that had taken the old man's life might still be lurking. The atmosphere was thick with palpable tension, as if the very air feared to utter a sound.



He focused his attention on the figure painted with the old man's blood. It was a symbol he had never seen before, yet somehow it resonated in his mind like a dark echo. Unease washed over him, for it was clear that his investigation had touched sensitive chords, and someone, or something, was determined to silence him.

Not wanting to tempt fate any further, he decided to leave the room. He still did not know the dark hand that seemed to be lurking behind him. He needed more information. With one last glance at the macabre scene, he quickly left the inn, his mind filled with questions and his spirit resolute to uncover the truth, no matter the cost.



As time passed, Roland began to notice the symbol in other places. It appeared in ancient documents, engraved on the walls of inhospitable locations that his research led him to. He soon concluded that it was part of an organization, something larger than he had initially imagined.

The atmosphere grew heavier as Roland walked through the city streets. That unsettling feeling had become his shadow, an invisible presence that followed him with every step. It was as if unseen eyes scrutinized him, watching every movement, every whisper that escaped his lips. Even when the streets seemed deserted, there was a weight in the air that made him feel vulnerable, as if every corner could hide an imminent danger.

Roland paused for a moment, leaning against the cold stone of a building. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath, trying to clear his mind of paranoia. But the sensation persisted, a dark warning that kept him on edge. He knew that his investigation had touched sensitive chords, and now it seemed that unknown forces wished to keep the truth hidden at any cost.

With renewed determination, Roland forced himself to move forward. He would not let the shadow of fear stop him. The truth was out there, and he was determined to unearth it, no matter the price.



As Roland investigated the physical world, Brynja, on her part, embarked on her own journey. Following the teachings of the old man Zugmar, she began to explore the spiritual realm. The trolls, in closer communion with nature, had a unique connection to that ethereal world where the secrets of antiquity were hidden.

Zugmar, with his voice trembling from age, warned her of the dangers. "The spiritual world is vast and unknown, Brynja. Accessing it is not complicated, but remaining there too long... could cost you your soul. If you get lost, if you yield to its temptations, you could be trapped forever, leaving your body here, empty."

Despite the risk, Brynja knew this was the only path to the truth. Like Roland, she was willing to face any challenge to break the chains of the curse.

In her early travels to the spiritual world, Brynja encountered the souls of her ancestors. Distances were not traversed by walking, but by the force of will. "You must have firm conviction," Zugmar repeated to her. "Only spirits that know what they seek can move in that world without getting lost."



The spiritual world, although initially imperceptible, revealed itself as a vast labyrinth of symmetry with respect to the physical world. In this ethereal plane, time lacked the linearity that mortals knew. Past eras intertwined and overlapped, creating a complexity that defied logic. It was a place where the echoes of history resonated, where each temporal thread told a story, a tale of times that had been but still vibrated in the essence of the spiritual world.

Upon entering this realm, one could observe how the threads of time extended in all directions. The threads closest to the present were of a dark and intense color, shining with a palpable energy, as if they were still alive with the emotions of the events that had woven them. However, as one moved backward, the threads became weaker, more ethereal, their colors fading into subtle tones that were difficult to detect. It was a reminder that time, although eternal in its flow, was also ephemeral in its manifestation.

Each thread had its own life cycle: a beginning, a development, and an end. Some threads, those representing everyday events, faded quickly, like mere whispers that left barely a trace. But there were others, threads that intertwined with critical events, which could endure for centuries, millennia, resonating with the force of decisions made and tragedies lived. These threads were like deep roots clinging to the ground of time, refusing to be forgotten.



The intensity of events influenced the life of these threads. Moments of great passion, pain, or conflict left indelible marks, capturing the essence of those who had lived and fought. As Brynja explored this world, she could feel the emotional weight emanating from the threads. Sometimes, when she touched one of those vibrant threads, it was as if the memories of her ancestors flowed through her, narrating stories of love, betrayal, and hope that had become trapped in the fabric of time.

However, the spiritual world was not just a refuge of memories; it was also a place of hidden dangers. Those who ventured too far could lose themselves in the tangled web of threads, trapped in a time that did not belong to them. Shadows lurked among the threads, reminding Brynja that, although she sought the truth, she must proceed with caution. The journey through the spiritual realm was a path filled with wonders and dangers, where each discovery could bring her closer to the truth, but also put her own essence at risk.

Gradually, and with much training, Brynja began to unravel small fragments of the trolls' history before the curse. Each journey brought her a little closer to the truth, but it also brought with it a growing danger. With each incursion, she felt a dark presence watching her, lurking in the shadows of the spiritual world.



It was after several years of hard training and exploration in the spiritual world that Brynja finally began to master the complex navigation of that ethereal plane. With each journey, her connection to the temporal threads grew stronger, and her ability to unravel the hidden stories of her ancestors sharpened. However, during one of her incursions, she encountered something unexpected that would change her perception of the spiritual world forever.

Hidden among the mist of time, she found a thread that shone with overwhelming intensity. It was a deeper and more vibrant color than any other she had seen before, even more than the threads connected to the present reality. Intrigued, Brynja realized that this thread might be related to a significant event that had occurred a thousand years ago. She had not detected it before, as it was veiled by a thick fog that made it practically invisible to untrained eyes.

Cautiously, Brynja began to investigate that thread. Curiosity guided her as she sought answers in the memories of her ancestors. She focused and started to converse with the spirit of an ancestor who seemed deeply connected to that thread. He was a wise troll, one who had lived in times before the curse that had marked her people. His presence was comforting, and Brynja felt that by unraveling this thread, she could gain valuable information about the origin of the curse and perhaps a way to break it.



However, as the conversation flowed, a sudden and disturbing change occurred. The ancestor, whose face reflected wisdom and patience, suddenly froze, his expression shifting from calm to horror. Brynja felt that something was wrong, but she couldn't pinpoint what it was. "No! It's coming for us!" the spirit screamed in a burst of terror. His words echoed in Brynja's mind like a heart-wrenching cry before the ancestor vanished in a flash of pure panic, leaving her alone in the vastness of the spiritual world.

Brynja felt a cold, invisible hand wrap around her soul, a chilling touch that made her shudder. It was as if a dark presence were breathing down her neck, lurking in the shadows of time. With a desperate gasp, she was forced to return to the real world, an act that required all her willpower. The transition was abrupt, and as she opened her eyes, she found herself in her room, her body trembling and covered in cold sweat.

The sensation of being watched overwhelmed her. It was the same unease she had felt during her travels in the spiritual world, but now it was palpable, as if a dark shadow had infiltrated her reality. Brynja realized that something, or someone, did not want her to continue seeking the truth. That revelation filled her with profound fear, but at the same time, her determination flared. She knew that the path to the truth was fraught with danger, but the desire to free her people from the curse was stronger than the terror she felt.

With her heart pounding and her mind filled with questions, Brynja vowed to herself that she would not be stopped. The search for the truth was her destiny, and although the shadows were stalking her, she was determined to confront them. She would not allow fear to rule her life; instead, she would transform it into the fuel that would drive her journey toward the truth. The darkness might be powerful, but her inner light was even brighter.



****Chapter 4: Rescue at Dawn****

Ten years had passed since Roland and Brynja began their quest, and now, the next Blood Moon was just a night away. Throughout those years, Roland had traversed countless paths, consulted libraries and monasteries, always searching for answers. That night, after hours of study in an abbey, he stepped into the cold darkness with a discovery that could be key to his investigation.

He had uncovered a hidden mention, a name crossed out in an old manuscript, a name that had been nearly erased from history: Isolde. The name echoed in his mind like a whisper, and although he still did not fully understand its connection to the curse, Roland knew he was on the right track. The missing piece he had been searching for had been revealed, along with the certainty that he would soon reach the truth he had long sought.

"Isolde.." Roland murmured as he walked through the deserted streets. "If I can discover who you were and what role you played, perhaps I can stop all of this.."

But as he pondered his discovery, he did not realize that the darkness around him was coming to life. In the shadows of the alley, sinister figures moved, following his every step.



Roland felt a shiver run down his spine when he heard a crack behind him. He quickly turned, his eyes adjusting to the dim light, and for a moment, he glimpsed several silhouettes emerging from the shadows, blocking his path. His heart began to race, like a war drum resonating in his chest. Without thinking twice, he changed direction, darting into a side alley, hoping to lose his pursuers.

But in the silence of the night, the unmistakable sound of fast, determined footsteps echoed behind him. Panic seized him. Adrenaline coursed through his veins as his mind filled with images of what could happen if he were caught. He ran with all his strength through the narrow streets, his feet pounding the cobblestones in a frantic rhythm, feeling the footsteps multiply behind him like an ominous echo. Each turn, each corner he rounded, became another trap, and he knew there was no way to stop.

The darkness seemed to come alive around him, as if the shadows themselves were complicit with his pursuers. He was just a few meters from the alley's exit when suddenly, a gigantic man appeared before him, blocking his way. His figure was imposing, and a mocking laugh echoed in the air, making him feel that his fate was sealed.

Desperate, he turned on his heels, but the air became thick and heavy, as if the world itself had turned against him. In an instant, his pursuers had already caught up to him. There was no time to think, no time to react. A sharp, forceful blow to the head plunged him into darkness.



As he fell, the world faded into a whirlwind of lights and shadows. The echo of his thoughts intertwined with a sense of abandonment, and in a split second, his mind filled with images of Brynja, of their love, and of the promise to free her soul from the curse. But darkness enveloped him, pulling him into an unfathomable abyss.

In that moment, the echo of his footsteps faded, and the cold of the night took hold of his being. The struggle extinguished, and with it, a spark of hope flickered out momentarily. What would become of him? What would happen to Brynja if he could not fulfill his mission?

However, just as silence settled, a shadow slipped through the gloom, and Roland's fate was about to take an unexpected turn. The fight was not over, and though he was unconscious, his spirit continued to cling to life, to the truth he had been seeking for so long.



When Roland woke up, the cold, damp air of the cell enveloped him. His body was bound hand and foot to a rough wooden chair. He tried to move, but the ropes were too tight. Beside him, a guard stood silently, watching the door of the cell. The guard noticed that Roland had regained consciousness and, without a word, signaled toward the shadow of the door, where another unseen guard responded with a slight movement.

Moments later, the door creaked open and a figure slowly entered the cell. It was a tall man with gray hair and dark eyes, dressed in black robes adorned with unknown symbols. His presence radiated authority and danger. Roland watched him warily.

"You finally wake up, Roland," the man said in a cold, calculating voice. "I am Osric, the leader of the Order of the Black Cross, a secret organization in the service of the church. We have been tracking your steps for years."

Roland gritted his teeth, knowing he was in serious danger, but he tried to remain calm. "What do you want from me?"

Osric smiled with a mixture of disdain and satisfaction. "It's not what we want from you, but what we already know about you. You have been probing into secrets that should not have been uncovered, and worse yet, you have the audacity to associate with a troll."

Roland's stomach tightened. They knew about Brynja.

"You have been judged, Roland," Osric continued, walking slowly around the chair. "Your actions have proven that you are an accomplice of the troll threat, an enemy of the divine order. And for that, you have already been condemned."



Roland swallowed hard, feeling the weight of the words. "Condemned? For what crime? I only seek the truth."

"The truth is dangerous, young Roland. It is not something everyone should know. Especially when the truth threatens the balance we have maintained for centuries. You have discovered too much, and for that, at dawn tomorrow, you will be executed. The pyre will be your fate."

Roland's blood ran cold. They were going to kill him at dawn. Everything he had done, everything he had fought to uncover, would end in just a few hours. But something inside him refused to give up. Brynja. He thought of her, of their love, of the promise to free her soul from the chains of the curse. He couldn't die now.

"And what about Isolde?" Roland asked, trying to buy time, knowing that this information could unsettle Osric. "You know so much, but I doubt you know the truth about her. What role did she play in the curse?"

Osric stopped short, his eyes narrowing with suspicion. "Watch your words, boy. You have touched upon a name that was meant to remain forgotten... No matter what you think you know, the truth is far beyond your grasp."



Roland realized he had struck a nerve. The name Isolde was not only key to his investigation, but it was also a threat to those who wanted to keep the curse intact.

"You have been a pawn in something much larger than you understand," Osric continued. "And tomorrow, when the sun rises, you will be eliminated, like so many others who have dared to challenge the established order."

Osric leaned closer to Roland, his dark eyes penetrating into his. "Pray for your soul, for you will not have much time left."

With those words, Osric turned and left the cell, leaving Roland with the sound of the door slamming shut behind him. The guard resumed his position, watching silently.

Roland took a deep breath, his mind racing. He had to get out of there; he had to survive to free Brynja and put an end to the curse. He gritted his teeth and looked at his bindings, searching for a way to escape. He knew time was running out, but his determination remained unwavering.

He would not die that night. Not while the truth was so close.



At the same time that Roland fell into the hands of his captors, Brynja found herself navigating the vast and unsettling spiritual world. In this ethereal plane, where the boundaries of time and space blurred, Brynja had learned to see beyond physical reality. As her mastery of the spiritual realm grew, she discovered the luminous threads that connected people in both worlds, a web of relationships and emotions woven over time.

She could clearly see the bright bond that tied her to her family: her father Rundak and her mother Vilda shone with a constant, warm, and reassuring light. The connection to the elder Zugmar, her mentor and guide, was also evident, though more faint and tranquil, like a serene river under the moonlight. However, the bond that shone the brightest was the one that linked her to Roland. The thread that connected them glowed with an intense purple hue, vibrant and full of life, as if reflecting the depth of the feelings they both shared.

As she explored this vast spiritual tapestry, Brynja suddenly felt a change in the thread that connected her to Roland. For a brief moment, his light flickered out. Roland had lost consciousness. At first, she thought he had simply fallen asleep, but soon, as she sensed the light beginning to shine again, she felt something she had never experienced in her connection with him: terror.

The vibration emanating from the thread was frantic, as if something dark and dangerous surrounded him. Her heart raced. Roland was in danger, and she had to do something.



Without wasting any time, Brynja ran to seek out Zugmar in the physical world, momentarily breaking her spiritual connection. The elder received her in his modest cabin, his calm gaze deeply concerned as he observed the urgency on the face of his young apprentice.

"Zugmar, something terrible is happening to Roland," Brynja said, panting as she tried to explain herself. "I can feel his fear... I must find him!"

Zugmar nodded slowly. He was aware of the relationship between Brynja and Roland, and although he did not fully approve, he understood the purity of their hearts and the special bond that connected them. With quiet resignation, he accepted that nothing would stop Brynja in her quest.

"Listen closely, Brynja," Zugmar said, his voice soft but firm. "The spiritual world can show us more than what the eyes can see, but finding someone in the physical world from there is a dangerous task. However, I know how to guide you."

Brynja watched him attentively, her heart racing as she absorbed every word.

"You must follow the thread of your connection with Roland," Zugmar explained. "Pull on it gently, refine it. You will feel his essence, and if you concentrate all your will, you will be able to find him in the physical world. But be careful: the closer you get to the truth, the more resistance you will encounter."



Without hesitation, Brynja returned to the spiritual world. She closed her eyes and, just as Zugmar had instructed, began to pull on the purple thread that connected her to Roland. She felt his presence slipping through the layers of the ethereal world, getting closer to her beloved. The thread grew stronger, clearer.

However, just as she was about to locate him, a dark presence appeared in her path. The darkness was thick, tangible, as if it were trying to rip away the control she had gained. Brynja felt the air around her becoming dense, and the darkness, like an invisible beast, roared around her, trying to divert her from her goal.

The pressure was unbearable. She was about to give in when suddenly, Zugmar appeared beside her in the spiritual world, his face grave but resolute. Without hesitation, he positioned himself between Brynja and the darkness, raising a barrier of light that prevented the shadow from advancing.

"Go! Find Roland," he urged her. "Do not stop."

"No! Zugmar, you can't...!" Brynja tried to reach for him, but the elder stopped her with a firm gaze.

"This is my destiny, Brynja. Your mission is far more important than mine. Now run... and don't look back."

The darkness surged toward Zugmar like an unstoppable wave. Brynja, in tears, felt the thread that connected her to Roland vibrate with greater intensity. She could not allow Zugmar's sacrifice to be in vain. With one last push of will, she managed to locate Roland.



At that moment, Zugmar's light flickered out. The elder had given his life to protect her. Before disappearing completely, his voice resonated softly in the spiritual wind: "She knows you can do it. Only you can break the curse. And remember, Brynja, even if it doesn't seem like it... you have control."

Back in the physical world, Brynja opened her eyes, her heart shattered by the loss of her mentor, but her determination intact. She knew exactly where Roland was. Time was running against her, but now she was not alone. Zugmar's sacrifice would not be in vain. Brynja would fight to free Roland and break the chains that held them trapped in the curse of the Blood Moon.

The night stretched out like a cloak of shadows, and Brynja ran with a speed and grace befitting her nature as a troll. Trolls were creatures of the night, and under its dark cover, their physical abilities multiplied. With each step, she glided between the trees as if she were part of the forest itself, almost flying among the branches and the damp leaves. Her breathing was steady and controlled as she advanced toward her destination with unstoppable urgency.

Time was her enemy. Dawn was just a few hours away, and Roland was in mortal danger. Brynja felt it with every fiber of her being, and the determination in her heart propelled each of her movements.



When she reached the outskirts of the city, the first signs of morning activity began to appear. Few people were visible on the streets at that hour: bakers heading to their ovens, some security guards patrolling, and the occasional drunk staggering back home. Brynja, hidden in the shadows, moved stealthily, her steps silent like a whisper in the wind. No one saw her, and those who did did not notice her presence.

Finally, she arrived at the house where Roland was imprisoned. At first glance, it seemed like an ordinary dwelling, but the large number of warriors guarding it indicated otherwise. Brynja, crouched in the darkness, observed each of their movements. Although she had the strength to take on two or three of those men, the number of guards made a direct assault impossible. If she wanted to save Roland, she would have to be more cunning.

Focusing on her innate abilities, Brynja called upon a silent ally. Trolls shared a deep connection with nature, and one of their gifts was the ability to communicate with the animals of the forest. She closed her eyes for a moment and whispered a request to the beings that lived nearby. Moments later, a wild boar emerged from the bushes behind the house, drawn by her call.

The boar made noise as it moved through the underbrush, grunting and stumbling over branches. The guards, alerted, turned toward the sound. One of them went to investigate, while the other stayed on watch from a distance. Brynja seized the opportunity. Like a shadow, she slipped around the side of the house and crept through a small window in the basement.



The basement was dark and damp, but what struck Brynja the most was its organization. It was not just a simple storage area; the entire space was divided into cells, a hidden prison under the guise of an ordinary home. Brynja, with the agility of a creature well-acquainted with her surroundings, moved among the beams of the ceiling, climbing silently as her eyes scanned every corner.

Finally, she saw him. Roland was bound in one of the cells, illuminated by several torches. A guard stood nearby, watching. Brynja quickly assessed the situation. The guard's position was challenging; any direct attack could raise the alarm. She couldn't take that risk.

She glanced at Roland, and in that moment, decided to use the language they had developed over the years. A system of signals using animal sounds that allowed them to communicate secretly. With a soft whisper, Brynja emitted the hoot of an owl, so delicate it seemed to come from outside. The sound of the owl had always meant "danger," and Roland recognized it instantly.

Cautiously, Roland raised his gaze toward the beams of the ceiling. When their eyes met, a mixture of relief and hope shone on his face, although there was also a shadow of fear. Brynja, from her position, tried to reassure him with a steady look. Everything would be alright.

With a series of quick gestures, Brynja indicated to Roland what he needed to do. The plan was simple: lure the guard close enough to the door so that she could act.



Roland, without wasting any time, dropped to the floor with a dull thud, causing the chair he was bound to to topple loudly. The guard, hearing the commotion, hurried to the cell, concerned that something had happened to the prisoner. Roland, gasping in feigned distress, pretended to have a seizure.

"You can't die now, boy! Not before dawn!" the guard shouted, cursing as he hurriedly opened the cell door.

Just as the guard entered, Brynja dropped down from the beams of the ceiling with the precision of a predator. She fell on the guard in a single, silent movement, knocking him out with controlled force before he could let out a single scream.

The guard's body hit the ground with a dull thud, unconscious. Brynja, not wasting any time, ran to Roland and quickly cut the ropes that bound him. As soon as he was free, they embraced for a brief second, the weight of years of struggle, fear, and hope crashing down on them.

"There's no time," Brynja whispered, pulling away as Roland nodded. They both knew that their greatest challenge was yet to come: escaping.



Brynja knew that every second counted. Her original plan was to escape through the same way she had entered, but when she peeked through a small crack in the basement wall, she saw that everything had changed. The patrols had been reorganized, and the exit was now under constant surveillance. The situation was more dangerous than she had imagined.

"The way is blocked," she whispered, turning back to Roland with a furrowed brow.

Roland, who had already regained his strength, approached cautiously. "This house is not just any prison," he explained in a low but urgent tone. "It's the headquarters of the church's secret troll hunter organization. Osric, the leader, told me all about it... he enjoyed doing so, knowing that my execution was scheduled for dawn."

Brynja's eyes filled with a mix of horror and determination. They could not waste any more time. Roland continued, his voice pressing: "Osric is going to give a sermon to his followers before the execution. That will be our moment. When everyone is focused on him, we will have our chance to escape."

Brynja nodded, knowing it was their only option. They prepared, watching as footsteps above them moved toward the main hall. When they heard the sound of many boots stopping and Osric's deep voice beginning his speech, both of them knew the moment had come.



They silently ascended the basement stairs, making their way to the first floor. When they arrived, Brynja cautiously peeked from the shadows into the main hall. Before her eyes, she could see about thirty troll hunters, all armed to the teeth with swords, bows, arrows, and axes. They formed a semicircle around Osric, who stood in the center, proclaiming with his deep, authoritative voice.

"Today, at dawn, we will deliver divine justice," Osric declared, his voice resonating throughout the hall. "The enemy of the church will be purged for their crimes against humanity."

Fortunately, Osric could not contain himself. He was a grandiloquent man, and as he spoke, he accompanied his words with exaggerated gestures and walked around the space in front of his followers. Often, he lost direct line of sight to the hall, which provided Brynja and Roland with the opportunity they needed.

"Now," Roland whispered, and both moved stealthily down the hallway, taking advantage of the moments when Osric had his back turned or was distracted with his gestures.

With almost millimetric precision, they managed to cross the house without being seen and reach a side door. They opened it carefully and, without making a sound, stepped out into the fresh morning air. Once outside, Brynja let out a small sigh of relief, but the danger was still not over.



They had managed to distance themselves a few dozen meters from the house when a sound that neither of them wanted to hear shattered the stillness of the night: an alarm began to ring, loud and piercing, echoing throughout the village. Something had happened inside, perhaps the guard in the basement had been discovered, or maybe someone had noticed their escape. It didn't matter. The only certainty now was that they had to flee at full speed.

"Run!" Roland shouted, and both abandoned any attempt at stealth to launch into a frantic sprint through the streets.

The first light of dawn began to wash over the sky while the houses remained shrouded in shadows. As they ran, the first villagers began to notice their presence. Some curious eyes peeked through windows, while others stared at the scene in surprise, and gradually, fear spread among them.

Behind them, the sound of horses' hooves began to resonate on the cobblestone streets. The troll hunters were already in pursuit, and they knew that if they didn't reach the forest before dawn, they would be lost.

"We have to get to the forest," Brynja said, her voice breathless as they ran. "It's our only chance."

The narrow streets of the village were a maze of alleys and turns, but Brynja and Roland ran without stopping, dodging obstacles with surprising agility. However, the sound of the horses was getting closer, and the metallic clanking of the troll hunters' armor grew louder.



It was then that Brynja saw something that could change the game: an improvised cell where a huge boar was trapped. The animal, destined to be sacrificed, was exactly what they needed. Without hesitation, Brynja ran to the cell, broke the latch with her powerful hands, and freed the boar.

The animal, confused and enraged, bolted out with tremendous strength. Brynja paused for a moment, looking into its eyes, and with a whisper in her secret tongue, she asked for its help. The boar, understanding her purpose, calmed down enough to allow her and Roland to climb onto its back.

Riding atop the powerful animal, they galloped through the narrow streets with a speed that no horse of the hunters could match. The boar zigzagged through the alleys with surprising agility for its size, while the sound of the horses fell behind.

The wind whipped against their faces as the village abruptly woke to their passage. The hunters shouted orders, but confusion and chaos reigned in the streets. After a few frantic minutes of pursuit, the forest appeared before them, its shadows promising the protection they so desperately needed.

Once among the trees, Brynja and Roland knew they would have the advantage. Nature was their ally, and in the thick of the forest, the troll hunters would have no chance of following them.

The boar safely brought them through the trees before finally stopping, panting from the effort. Brynja ran her hand along its back in gratitude before dismounting with Roland.



"Thank you," she whispered to the animal, and with a soft grunt, the boar disappeared into the underbrush, fading into the silence of the forest.

"We did it," Roland said, his voice trembling but filled with relief.

Brynja nodded, though deep inside she knew that the real fight was still yet to begin. But for now, at least, they were safe.



****Chapter 5: Final Judgment****

Osrice found himself in the midst of an internal storm, unable to accept failure. The mission to capture and execute Roland had been entrusted to him from the highest echelons, an origin shrouded in mystery and power. For him, failure was not an option, and he had known that from the moment he received the order.

As the leader of the troll hunters, Osrice, like all those who had preceded him, had undergone a special rite: communion with his true leader in the spiritual world. Normally, contact with that entity was limited to the first initiation, a unique moment that sealed the pact of loyalty between the hunter and the darkest forces of the church. However, Osrice had been an exception. That presence had communicated with him again, directly, something almost unheard of.

The voice had been clear and unequivocal: Roland must die before the Blood Moon. He did not know the details of why, but he understood that the date held profound significance. In the spiritual world, dates were not arbitrary. The energies that flowed there responded to invisible rhythms and cycles, and Osrice had no doubt that his superiors knew the secrets he did not comprehend. But his mission was clear: kill Roland before dawn.



Seeing that his prey had escaped, the feeling of defeat overtook him, a bitter reminder of his failure. He could not afford that luxury. He had come too far, and the cost of failing was not just his life, but his soul.

Osric locked himself in his study, in front of the fire, his mind spiraling into a dark vortex of self-criticism and rage. He knew what he had to do: communicate once more with his leader in the spiritual world. But he feared the consequences. The two previous experiences had been terrifying, a blend of chaos and confusion that left him exhausted and filled with dread. This time would be worse.

Sitting in an old oak chair, Osric began the ritual. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath, allowing his consciousness to slide out of his physical body. He felt his mind crossing the threshold between the two worlds, but this time, instead of the familiar transition, he was met by a furious storm.

His body felt as if it were being torn apart from within as an invisible wind pushed him toward the void. The pain was unbearable. For a moment, Osric thought he would not survive this encounter. However, after what seemed like an eternity, the chaos calmed, and there, amidst the shadows, was his leader.



The figure before him was indistinct, shrouded in darkness. But the power it radiated left no doubt. This entity was not of this world.

Osrice tried to speak, his voice trembling and filled with fear. "My... my lord. I "

But he was interrupted by the cold silence that loomed over him. He felt his heart racing faster and faster, a crushing pressure enveloping him, as if every breath was being stolen from his chest. Finally, his leader's voice broke the silence, each word piercing his soul like a knife.

"You will not fail again." The voice was calm yet penetrating. "You have until nightfall."

Osrice barely had time to process the words when, suddenly, he was thrown back into the physical world. He awoke gasping, sweating, and breathing heavily, as if he had been on the brink of drowning. But his torment was not over. As soon as he opened his eyes, an indescribable pain coursed through his body.

Every part of him burned, as if his flesh were being devoured from within. He screamed, unable to contain the suffering that consumed him. His skin seemed to crack and twist, as his hands transformed into sharp claws, and his muscles grotesquely swelled, gaining monstrous strength. His legs developed such powerful musculature that they rivaled those of a warhorse, and his torso grew to the size of a wild beast. Only his head remained human, though his eyes were now two wells of total darkness, devoid of any light or humanity.



Osrice rose unsteadily and looked at himself in a nearby mirror. What he saw left him in awe. His body had been transformed into a machine of destruction. He reveled in his new form, observing with fascination every claw, every muscle. The power was palpable. He was stronger, faster, and with that power, he knew he would be unstoppable.

With a twisted smile, he murmured to himself, "I will hunt Roland down, and I will tear his head off. My lord will know he can trust me."

When Osrice stepped out of his study, his men looked at him in horror. The monstrosity he had become was a terrifying sight, but they did not hesitate. For them, this transformation was not a punishment but a sign that Osrice had been touched by divine spirits. The leader of the troll hunters had been blessed with the power necessary to carry out his mission. Their faith in him was unshakable.

"We are leaving!" roared Osrice, his voice deeper and more guttural than before. "Today, we will hunt Roland, and failing is not an option."

Under the terrifying gaze of their leader, Osrice's men set out. They were terrified but also inspired by the presence of what they believed to be a warrior blessed with the power of the gods. They headed into the forest, ready for the final hunt. Roland and Brynja would have no escape.



Osric, in his new form, led the march with renewed determination. Today, the hunt would end. And he would finally prove his loyalty and power to his leader in the spiritual world.

As the first rays of sunlight pierced the forest canopy, Brynja felt an immediate change in her body. Her energy, so powerful and natural under the cloak of night, began to fade. Trolls and sunlight were not good companions; prolonged exposure not only weakened their abilities but, under the scorching sun, could even endanger their lives.

With dawn came a new worry. Brynja and Roland, who had escaped swiftly during the darkness, now moved more slowly. They had to choose their path carefully, always seeking the protection that the shadows of the trees offered them. Despite her connection to the animals of the forest, Brynja knew she could not ask for their help in the intense daylight. The animals did not understand the danger that light posed to her, and running through the clearing was an invitation to disaster.

Every step they took felt like a struggle against time. The night of the Blood Moon was approaching inexorably, and if they did not reach the refuge in time, Brynja would not be able to avoid transforming into the beast that the curse forced her to be. The place they had prepared for their confinement was several hours away, and although they believed it was still possible to arrive, they knew the risks were high. Time was not on their side.



But the light was not their only problem.

As they moved through the forest, both began to hear the unmistakable sound of hooves striking the ground. Osric and his hunters were near. Brynja's muscles tensed at the sound of the approaching horses, and Roland, ever alert, knew immediately that they needed to find a hiding spot.

"This way," whispered Roland, pointing to a small cave hidden among the underbrush and rocks.

They hurried into the cave, hoping that the group of hunters would pass by. The cave was small, barely enough to conceal them, and her heart raced as they listened to the echo of the hooves getting closer and closer. Brynja held her breath, her eyes fixed on the cave entrance. She knew that the troll hunters would not give up easily.

The noise of the horses stopped.

Roland exchanged a quick glance with Brynja, his face pale but determined. They knew they could not stay there for long. The hunters were close, too close.



"I will distract them," whispered Roland, determined. "If I can lead them away long enough, you'll be able to reach the refuge in time."

"No, Roland. I'm not going to let you do that," Brynja replied, her eyes shining with a mix of fear and love. The thought of separating from Roland, knowing the danger he would face, filled her with terror.

"Listen," said Roland, taking Brynja's hands in his. "There is no other option. If we stay here, they will find us both, and we won't make it in time to avoid the transformation. Let me do this. If I can distract them, it will give you the time you need."

Brynja looked at Roland for a long moment, wanting to protest, wanting to refuse to leave him alone. But the truth was undeniable: Roland was right. They could not face Osric and his men and expect to survive. She had to reach the refuge before the Blood Moon. With a heavy heart, she slowly nodded.

"I will find you afterwards," she said in a whisper, tears threatening to surface. "This is not goodbye."

"I know," Roland replied, forcing a smile that barely concealed his own fear. "This is just part of the plan."



Brynja called to a deer that had been grazing nearby. Silently, she asked it to carry Roland as far away from the hunters as possible. The deer, understanding its mission, bent slightly as Roland mounted its back.

Before departing, Brynja and Roland shared one last kiss, a moment filled with uncertainty and hope. They knew danger surrounded them, but in that brief instant, there was only the two of them. They hoped it would not be the last time.

As Roland began to ride the deer, the sound of the hunters intensified again. Osric and his group quickly picked up on the noise of the animal's hooves, and without hesitation, they began the chase. Roland and the deer disappeared among the trees, with the hunters following, their shouts and the thunder of horses echoing through the forest.

After a few minutes, the sound of the hunters faded, and Brynja allowed herself to breathe again. The plan had worked... to a certain extent. However, something did not feel right. She sensed a disturbance in the air, as if something dark was still watching her.

Image :CaveEntrance



It was then that she knew. Osric had not left with the rest of the hunters. His presence, invisible yet heavy, was still close. Brynja looked around, trying to locate the danger. The momentary calm in the forest was just an illusion. Osric, now transformed into something more than human, was still on her trail.

Brynja reached the entrance of the cave a few minutes before the sun disappeared completely. Every step she had taken towards this refuge had been a battle, but finally, she was safe... or so she thought. Through the shadows, she could make out a human figure waiting for her in the dim light. Her eyes, filled with exhaustion and relief, soon lit up upon recognizing him.

"**Roland, my love...**" she began to say, but her words faded into the air. The expression on Roland's face was not what she expected. Instead of the warmth he usually offered, his face was masked by terror. He pleaded with his eyes for her to flee.

Before Brynja could react, she felt an overwhelming force grab her from behind. Osric, with his monstrous strength and speed, had captured her, holding her in a grip that cut off her breath. His laughter echoed in the cave, laden with cruelty and malice.



"Did you really think you would escape so easily?" Osric mocked, reveling in his victory. "This has all been too simple. Every one of your moves has led me directly to this moment."

Osric began to boast about his plan in a chilling tone. He explained how, by allowing Roland to flee with the deer, he had manipulated his own men into following him to this place, hoping it would lead them to the trolls' refuge. Meanwhile, his new powers allowed him to sense the presence of a troll aiding Roland, though it was only now that he understood how deep their bond was.

"It's disgusting," Osric said with contempt as he watched Brynja and Roland. "That union between troll and human... will be the cause of your ruin."

The troll hunters were fully aware of the power that the night of the Blood Moon brought with it. Osric, delighting in his own cruelty, chained Brynja to the ground with shackles that allowed her to move only a few meters. As the glow of the red moon began to light up the sky, Osric could hardly contain his excitement. For him, the spectacle was about to begin.

With a twisted smile, he dragged Roland in front of Brynja, ensuring that they locked eyes. There was a silent understanding between them, a painful recognition that these could be their last moments together. Roland was trapped, helpless, and Brynja was chained, with the transformation that the Blood Moon would bring lurking on the horizon.



Then, with calculated slowness, Osric unsheathed his knife and plunged it into Roland's belly. A mortal wound, slow, designed to cause prolonged suffering. Brynja screamed, her soul torn apart by horror. She tried to break the chains, cursing with fury, but it was futile. Osric, savoring every second, pushed Roland towards Brynja, letting his wounded body fall into her arms.

Brynja held him gently, as if her hands could keep his soul inside his body. Her heart broke as she watched Roland's life slowly fade away. Powerlessness consumed her.

Osric looked up at the sky and declared, "And now... let the spectacle begin."

The Blood Moon rose high, its crimson light bathing the scene in a sinister glow. Brynja then understood Osric's true intention: he wanted her to transform in front of Roland, to let the curse consume her, and for her monstrous form to devour the man she loved. Terror filled her veins, but so did rage. She refused to let the beast take control, but the transformation had already begun.

Her body began to change. Her claws grew, her muscles tensed, and the roar of the beast fought to escape her throat. Every fiber of her being was being invaded by darkness. It was inevitable. She felt the monster taking over her, pushing her towards an abyss she feared she could not escape.



Then, the words of Zugmar echoed in her mind: "Remember, that although it may not seem like it, you have control."

With one last effort, Brynja fought against the darkness. She clung to those words as if they were a rope thrown in the midst of a storm. As the spiritual and physical worlds intertwined, Brynja, with an almost superhuman strength, pulled against the chain that bound her, not only in the physical world but also in the spiritual one. She felt something deep within her respond. The beast recoiled, weakened by Brynja's unbreakable will.

Finally, she broke the chains.

The bloodlust faded. Brynja, in complete control of her being, leaned towards Roland, whose strength was already waning, and kissed him gently. Tears fell from her eyes as her lips touched his, as if that kiss were the only way to stop the horror looming over them.

At that moment, the sky suddenly darkened. A shroud of red and black clouds covered the entire world, and a bolt of pure energy descended from the heavens, connecting the earth and sky right where Brynja and Roland stood. The impact of the bolt was so powerful that everything around them was vaporized instantly. The troll hunters, who had witnessed the scene, turned to dust, their screams silenced in a sigh.



Osric, his monstrous body resisting the power of the bolt for a few more seconds, looked on in horror and fascination. He saw Brynja transform, but not into the beast he had expected. Her features softened, an elfin beauty overtook her face, and a divine light seemed to envelop her. But what disturbed Osric the most was what happened next.

Before his very eyes, Roland's wounds began to close. His body, which had been on the brink of death, was slowly healing under Brynja's touch. Osric, unable to comprehend what he was witnessing, tried to speak, but before he could do so, his own body disintegrated into dust, swept away by the very storm he had created.



****Chapter 6: Liberation****

Brynja and Roland remained embraced for what felt like an eternity. There were no words, only the steady rhythm of their hearts and the stillness that enveloped them. The world around them seemed to have changed in some way, but neither dared to move. They feared that if they separated, that magical moment might fade away.

The air surrounding them was charged with an indescribable energy, as if something extraordinary and profound had just occurred. Although the sky was still covered with dark clouds, a sense of peace began to envelop the forest. The storm that had battered the land moments ago was no longer a threat, but a symbol of the change that had just taken place.

Suddenly, a white, ethereal figure began to form before them. Brynja and Roland, though exhausted, instinctively took a defensive stance, alert to any possible danger. The figure floated slightly above the ground, wrapping the space in a soft, warm light. It was a woman, her silhouette blurred but undeniably serene. Before they could react, a velvety voice resonated in the air.

"Do not be afraid," said the figure with a softness that calmed their hearts. "I will not harm you. Not now, nor ever."



Brynja and Roland exchanged glances, still cautious, but the woman's words came to them like a balm. The fear they had felt began to dissipate slowly. The figure, now clearer, was Isolde. But she no longer radiated that dark and vengeful energy that had aided Osric. Isolde had changed.

The peace emanating from her was palpable. Her face, once marked by hatred and pain, now reflected a deep, almost celestial calm. Her eyes, which had once been filled with resentment, now shone with gratitude.

"Thank you," Isolde began, her voice soft as a breeze. "Thank you for showing me that I was wrong. The relationship between our species... was never the problem. It was my own pain that blinded my vision. But now I see clearly. And for that, I can leave in peace, alongside my daughter."

Brynja and Roland listened to her in silence, their hearts filled with emotions. Isolde, who had been the cause of so much suffering for a thousand years, was now thanking them for showing her the way to redemption. Isolde's figure slowly rose, and as she did, Brynja and Roland could see how an aura of white light enveloped her form. It was as if all the hatred and despair that had once consumed her had faded away.



"True love can heal even the deepest wounds," Isolde continued, her ethereal form rising higher, almost touching the starry sky. "Your union has shown that peace and love can prevail, even when everything seems to be against you."

With those final words, Isolde's figure gently faded among the stars, leaving behind a trail of light that illuminated the sky for a brief moment before vanishing completely. The calm that followed was almost supernatural. The wind blew softly, as if the world itself breathed a sigh of relief for the first time in a thousand years.

In that moment, both Brynja and Roland felt something within them. It was as if an invisible chain they had carried in their souls, a chain that had been there for so long without their awareness, had broken. The sensation of liberation was overwhelming, and they were not the only ones to feel it. The entire world, humans and trolls alike, experienced that same relief, that same feeling of freedom.

The sky, once covered in shadows, began to clear. The first stars appeared, shining with renewed intensity, as if nature itself responded to the change that had just taken place. The world had changed.



Brynja and Roland looked at each other, their hands still intertwined, knowing that something profound had happened, something that would mark the fate of their world forever. It was not only their curse that had been broken, but also the barriers that had separated trolls and humans for a thousand years. A new beginning lay before them, one where both could imagine a future together.

"Do you think this means...?" Roland murmured, his voice trembling but full of hope.

Brynja nodded, her eyes filled with tears of joy. "Yes. Love... has changed everything."

Both knew that although the future would bring new challenges, something essential had been restored in the world. The harmony that had been lost so long ago was now within reach, and the freedom that came with it gave everyone, humans and trolls alike, a new opportunity.

Unconditional love, the kind that knows no borders, that does not fear differences, had triumphed. And while they did not know exactly what tomorrow held for them, they knew they would face it together.