

[Adam C. POV]

My chest heaved with each ragged breath I drew, my heart pounded against my ribcage as if it was trying to break free as if it was on the verge of exploding.

I smiled.

Sweat poured down my face as I tried to steady myself, my gaze locked on Artemis, who stood a few yards away, her own eyes fixed on me with a mixture of anger as she aimed her bow at me.

The energy within me roiled and churned, growing more and more unstable with each passing moment. I could feel it tearing at the fabric of my very being, threatening to rip me apart from the inside out.

It was a searing, excruciating pain that left me barely able to stand, let alone fight.

I clenched my fists, my knuckles turning white from the pressure.

It was as if my very soul was fragmenting, the pieces of me threatening to disintegrate like the ashes of a burnt-out fire. I

had to end this now. I couldn't keep this power for much longer, I had to end this in one blow, or I wouldn't make it out of this alive.

I tried to move forward, but even that felt like an agonizing task. I glanced down at my hands, which trembled uncontrollably. It felt as if I was losing control of my own body, my limbs rebelling against my mind's commands.

I could feel my muscles breaking, and tearing apart with each passing second.

I hacked and wheezed, until my throat was raw, coughing up a thick spray of blood that poured into the ground, feeling the searing pain that felt like burning knives with every breath tearing through my lungs.

I could feel blood coming out of my ears, and even my eyes.

Seeing this, Artemis advanced slowly, her eyes narrowing as she studied me.

I could see the uncertainty in her movements, the hesitation as she tried to decide whether to press her advantage or not, whether or not to shoot her arrow.

It seemed that she was having trouble grasping the situation.

I sighed, and gritted my teeth, forcing myself to focus, pushing through the pain that threatened to consume every fiber of my being.

I had to end this.

Now.

Taking a step forward, I raised my blade high, as the world around me seemed to blur and fade, while I channeled every last ounce of my strength into this final attack.

And with that, I brought my blade down, and drove into the ground, with all my might, with every ounce of power I could muster, releasing a massive arc of energy toward the Goddess.

At first, Artemis didn't move.

She stood there, watching, as the energy behind my attack intensified, filling the air with a burning, searing heat.

However before my attack could reach her, she raised her bow and fired her arrow at the energy.

Two blasts of energy collided, clashing with a loud boom until my attack surged and swallowed hers, shattering her arrow into tiny fragments before landing on her chest, pushing her back before slicing past her.

Unable to hold myself any longer, I watched in pain as Artemis remained standing after my attack, appearing seemingly unharmed.

"My hunt... ends," Artemis muttered, bowing her head to take a painful breath as a river of crimson spilled onto the earth from the gaping wound in her chest that was starting to appear.

Giving one final glare, she gave one last gasp before she fell forward, breaking into two pieces on the ground.

I did it.

Allowing myself to enjoy my victory, I fell to my knees, as the last of my energy dissipated and died with a loud crackling sound.

Unable to control my pain, I let out a choked cough, spitting out another mouthful of blood, feeling myself collapse onto the ground.

I lay on my back, struggling to breathe, my vision swimming as the world around me seemed to spin in circles.

I could see Artemis, lying in the distance, in a pool of her own blood, pieces of her armor shattered and scattered onto the ground around her.

I smiled weakly.

My whole body was trembling uncontrollably, my hands felt like they were on fire, my very bones felt like they were rotting away, and the muscles within me felt like they were being ripped apart.

It felt as if I was being crushed from the inside out. Now even more than before when I was actually using more power.

Unable to move, I watched as the sky was filled with swirling black clouds, feeling how the ground beneath me began to shake violently.

Right.

Without Artemis, there was nothing keeping this realm was there?

With that realization in mind, I struggled to catch my breath as I watched through half-opened eyes, the body of the Goddess that kept this realm together began to fade away, her entire being turned into dust.

Knowing I didn't have much time, I tried to push myself up, but my body wouldn't respond.

So, unable to act, I watched as the world around me began to disappear with Artemis' grip on this reality being no longer present.

Trees and rocks vanished into thin air, leaving only a black void that seemed to stretch on forever.

Within moments, I found myself falling through the void, into a new area, hurtling towards the forest I was in before all of this began.

Panic seized me as I realized that I was plummeting towards certain death, being fully aware I was in no state to take any more damage.

I refuse to go out like this!

Through sheer determination, I screamed and forced myself to use the last of my strength to shoot a pulse of pure energy at the ground, catching myself inches away from the ground, stopping my descent from becoming my cause of death.

I did it...

Struggling to breathe, I witnessed as my vision started to fade slowly but surely leaving me in a world of black, in a world of nothingness, my body aching with every part of my being screaming out in agony.

Well, Zanryuzuki wasn't lying when she said my body wasn't ready for more power.

I felt like if I closed my eyes, I would die.

I don't think I have ever felt this beaten.

Heck, the injuries I took with my fight with Deliora felt like love taps compared to this.

The old man will probably scold me...

Gildarts will probably do the same...

Lexus will probably laugh at me.

Oh god...

I can't let Lilia know this...

She will never stay in Magnolia ever again, she will go all protective on me...

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[Mavis Vermillion POV]

I floated aimlessly through the forest, my form drifting among the trees. For the last few hours I had been searching for Adam, but there was no sign of him.

I knew the Goddess had taken him away, but I also knew he would come back.

As I pondered on that thought I felt a sudden pull towards a nearby clearing.

Rushing to that location, I saw him lying on the ground, his body above a pool of his own blood.

"Adam?!" I shouted, rushing to him.

My heart sank as I realized the gravity of the situation.

I could barely feel his magic power.

I floated closer to him, hating myself because I knew that I couldn't help him. As this... this projection, I was powerless to heal his wounds or protect him from harm.

If his injuries didn't kill him, anything else could.

And I would be powerless to do anything, but watch.

I watched helplessly as he struggled to breathe, his eyes darting back and forth under his eyelids.

I wanted to reach out and comfort him, to tell him that everything would be alright, but I knew that it would be a lie.

Tears formed in my eyes as I looked down at him, wishing that there was something, anything, that I could do to help.

Never before have I hated my condition as much as I did now.

Never before had I been forced to see that I was a mere shadow of my former self, unable to touch the living world or interact with it in any meaningful way.

No...

There was still something I could do...

Fairy Sphere.

It would keep him... as he was, until I could get someone to come and heal him.

The spell was designed to work best under our sacred grounds, but I didn't need it to work perfectly, just for long enough to heal him.

As I stood in the clearing, readying myself to use the spell to put Adam in stasis, the sound of footsteps drew my attention to the edge of the forest.

Feeling the sudden change of atmosphere, the sudden twist of energy that now crept throughout the forest, I turned to see a figure emerging from the trees, and my heart skipped a beat as I recognized him.