

Fondest Farewells

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Days turned to weeks, and the summer heat began to cool to make way for the upcoming fall. The leaves of the trees had the slightest hint of yellow among the foliage as the air became just crisp enough to show that the seasonal shift would grace the Queen's lands once again. A moment before the sun began to set, the Bubble over Bristol was greeted with a familiar figure once more.

The Void walked close along the perimeter. Every so often They placed Their hand along the translucent wall to feel for any further defects on the surface. Taking Their ease, the Void eventually came across the very crack that had caught Their attention initially so long ago.

When the Void last felt the fissure, there was an overwhelming slew of emotions that could be sensed from the inside. The heartbreak, the sadness, the anger, all of which could have been the perfect soil to plant the seeds that would free the Vanguard from their Gods — had Arachne not deviated from her orders. It would have been perfect had she not let her own selfish motivations consume her. The Void had worked hard to try to win the Vanguard's trust. However, ever since Arachne's betrayal, the Void had pondered over the matter for some time. Annoyance soon turned to rage as the Void remembered the events. The Void's face grew hot for a moment. Then, a sweet and swift breeze blew from the crack. It softly washed over Them.

The air that escaped was pleasantly cool, and the emotions that followed were far different than before. The phenomenon piqued Their curiosity, and so They pressed Their palm against the crack to feel the memories that flowed out. Events of mourning became a celebration of life for the joy those within once shared together. Conflicts began to resolve due to a stubborn and complicated determination for peace. Before the Void could take Their hand away, the air suddenly rushed out quicker. Time had no meaning as everything flowed faster than the Void anticipated. The future. The past. All at once.

Champions drink from the heart of a bloodthirsty dragon only to find that she is also guarding the last thing she truly loves — her child.

Rivalry is set aside as factions become one during dire circumstances.

Love is found and love is lost.

Grief strikes a blow — then steps aside to make way for hope and rebirth.

The Void let out an uncharacteristic gasp as They pulled Their hand away. As the gust came to a halt, there was an eerie silence before the whistle of the breeze through the fracture started back up. Still stunned by the overwhelming emotions, They looked down to see the grass waving along the edge of the Bubble that touched the ground. There, nestled in the dirt, was a

thin trace of the ashy remains of Arachne stuck to the lip of the Bubble where it found shelter from the breeze.

The Void gave a defeated sigh as They regained Their composure. Arachne could have done so much good had she not given in to selfishness. The Void looked at Their hand, the one that granted her such power — the power to be free, to be her own self. The Void did not wish to become corrupt like the Gods, vying to elevate themselves at every chance. Climbing for authority and only sharing favors to those deemed "worthy". To be inserted into the story as a divine savior would not serve justice when it was truly the mortals returning every summer who always proved to be the true heroes all those years.

As the Void looked back up, the crack had grown. Perplexed by it They leaned in slightly to look closer as it began to rupture upward, then side to side. Cool air once again blew from the fissures, and the memories began to repeat themselves. Before the Void could speak some sort of spell, the Bubble had already formed an intricate weave similar to that of struck glass. The tension was interrupted by the sound of wind rushing forth as it burst through — shattering the Bubble.

As the last remaining emotion washed over the lone figure in the field, a tear had already left a streak down Their face. They watched as the world shifted around Them and moved on. They stood there for a moment taking it in. Silence was broken by the sound of birds in the distance, and the summer breeze around the Void picked up once more.

The Bubble no longer encapsulated Bristol. With a tilt of Their head the Void did notice a slight iridescent shine which covered the area when looked at from the corner of the eye. Despite the beauty, the Void felt something foreign inside Them like a pit in one's stomach. They knew deep down They would not be able to recruit here any longer nor did They want to. Yet, what was felt burned deeper than that. The Void stood stunned from feeling everything from everyone all at once.

While the wind around Them naturally danced with the tall grass and billowed the cloak of the Void, a memory rode along with it as it brushed against Their skin. The warm touch of summer was not over, and the Void swore They felt a hand on their cheek, wiping the tear away.

The Band of the Twisted Claw,
The Lunar Tribe,
The Order of the Sun,
The Draco Disciples,
Then finally the Vanguard.

All were absent but also still here. All existed still within the winds and their laughter could be heard in the rustling of the tree leaves. They were still real somewhere and nowhere, as all were such stuff as dreams are made on. Such years of life were rounded with a sleep as their memories rode to and fro on the winds like delicate dreams.

The Void looked to the Bristol Gates in the distance and kindly smiled, "They shall always be with you in the wind. Those you love, those you've adventured with, the very memories. Be well. This journey is now yours and yours alone. Change will always be frightening, but hopefully your choice will be to have fun so that your laugh too shall ride with them on the wind."