

Deep in the frosted woods of Dayglare lay the sleepy village of Thalun. It was a small village, with a small number of things happening within it. Living in Thalun could not be more than 56 persons, and thus everyone within the village would know each other's names and activities just through word of mouth.

"Ah, did you hear of Gris, and her new pair of shoes?"

"Oh, no I had not heard, so how are they for her?"

"Ah, not very good, for she has muddied them already!"

Petty happenings were the only happenings within Thalun, and those people who had lived here were content with that. The stories of the terrible old monsters within their library were, simply, stories. To those who lived here, life would be kind.

However, this belief was sorely mistaken. Life cannot be kind, nor can it be unkind. Life is unfeeling, and thus has no such capacity to care for or sense of what could be thought of as kind or unkind; life simply is. Out of nowhere, cataclysms can appear or devastation can strike, and life would be no more or less kind for it.

As such, unfeeling life would then send disaster to Thalun.

A fury dragon, on a ramble throughout the region, had been fortunate enough to come across the small village of Thalun within the frosted woods. That is, he was fortunate in that the dragon had been searching for his own residence, and had just so happened to find one he could make his own. The village of course was already occupied, but this could be easily fixed.

The dragon flew downwards, and landed itself within the central plaza of the small village Thalun. With a terrible cry, he swept his tail and the tavern was no more. The beast made a step forwards, and gone too was the center's fountain.

Through the fury's mind flew the vision of darkness. Blessed with the magic of disasters, this dragon held the power of foresight, and so he saw this vision to mean the end of the village.

Ah yes, thought the dragon, to oblivion with it!

As the villagers scrambled to escape the growing confusion, the dragon let out another cry,

louder and more horrible than the first. The monster sought to touch a power greater than what he had known himself capable of. And all around him, orbs of black flame appeared and began to throw themselves throughout the village.

Indeed, this was the inceptor flame: the most terrible power of the disaster magic. These flames burned not only at the objects they touched, but at the universe itself.

Made high by his vision, the dragon was no longer interested in the small village as a prospective home. Rather, it sought the prophesied destruction of the small, once sleepy village of Thalun.

The flames greedily ate at the buildings as they had been instructed to. They left not even ash to choke on, but instead thoroughly removed what they had touched from existing at all. Within a few hours, nothing would be left, and the dragon would need to leave for elsewhere.

This thought brought excitement to the beast, as he considered bringing more destruction into the world. Yes, these flames, a tool which he did not know he could use even minutes ago, they could serve a utility far greater than any desolate home could. These flames could bring entertainment to the fury.

The library that had kept the stories of monsters had caught fire now as well, burning away the words written of epic battles against monsters. Though such a monster appeared in Thalun now as well, the villagers still could not help but to think of these tales still as mere stories. After all, the monster had rarely won in those.

Petty as this distinction was, one must remember that life in the village prior to the fury dragon's visitation had been nothing but petty, and so this decision was one easily reachable for those who had once lived in Thalun.

"Fury!"

The voice came from behind the dragon. He turned his head around himself to see who had called him, and saw a woman with pointed ears and short black hair standing still. Distracted from his destruction of the village, the dragon turned the rest of his body around to face her.

“What is your name?”

She asked the dragon a silly question; he was destroying the village and she wanted his name! The dragon summoned another great orb of black flame, and prepared to send it towards the woman.

“Surely being blessed with disasters will let you communicate?” She asked the dragon.

The dragon bared his teeth and let out a low growl. It was true, the magic of disasters granted the power of mental communication to the dragon. With his species normally unable to speak to others, the dragon decided to employ his ability.

Child, the dragon began projecting his thoughts to the mind of the one before him, Why should you care for something so inconsequential as such as my name?

The dragon lifted his head to look around at his work. Very few buildings were free of fire, and some were beginning to crumble apart.

Your village will be gone, and my name meaningless to any but myself.

The woman put her arms out to a shrug.

“Meager curiosity!” She spoke, “For what it is worth, my name is Gris.”

Indeed, this was the Gris who had muddied her new shoes earlier, though in this moment she was actually wearing different shoes. She was a shoemaker, and felt relatively unafraid of the fury dragon on account of her past experiences with wrathful customers.

In truth, Gris the shoemaker simply wished to stall for time, ensuring any of those she had known in the village to be able to escape the fury dragon.

The dragon stepped forwards, and Gris impulsively stepped back. She resolved herself, and then stepped to her original position.

I am Kral.

Kral stepped forwards again, becoming even closer to Gris. He then lifted his right paw high above her.

Now to nothing with you, child.

The dragon began to bring his paw down upon Gris, but was interrupted by her yelling out in protest against her demise.

“Wait!” She cried, “I am no child, I am an adult of 25!”

The dragon placed the risen paw elsewhere and instead brought his face down to the same level as the woman who stood before him.

A child to any fury dragon, Kral spat.

The dragon began to move forwards once more, pushing Gris further back. Her composure was beginning to break.

Do you wish to do nothing but play these games?

The dragon’s thoughts were brimming with hostility now, and Gris’s mind was racing. She had to think of something to save the situation.

“I-is that what you want to do?” She managed to stutter out.

Kral suddenly ceased his advance, and tilted his head to the side. The woman’s question bewildered the dragon.

What?

With the dragon no longer coming closer, Gris made an attempt to collect herself once again.

“Do you want to play a game?”

Still, this recollection was nothing short of a panic. Only able to go off what the fury dragon had said previously, she had asked the monster to play a game with her.

Stupid! She thought to herself.

But instead of an instant death, Kral the fury dragon looked at her in contemplation. For some reason, the dragon was considering her proposal!

What kind of game? Kral asked her.

Still trying to calm down, Gris responded.

“A singing contest!” She spoke, “We can see who has a better singing voice!”

Kral tilted his head the other way.

But surely you would win, he responded, *we furies are not known for our singing.*

Gris had at this point almost calmed back down. The prospect of being able to challenge a fury dragon to a singing contest right in front of her, she decided to try to convince him.

“Oh, but it’s a game,” she reassured Kral, “It’s not about winning or losing. It’s about having fun!”

The dragon squinted his eyes, and a vision of darkness flew through his mind once more. He looked to his surroundings. The fires had continued to spread during the conversation, and the destruction of Thalun was progressing. On some level, this conversation had been amusing for the dragon, and so he was mildly curious about the proposed singing contest.

I suppose it does not matter, Kral thought to himself, *this village will be not even ash either way.*

The dragon returned to looking at Gris straight on.

If winning or losing does not matter, Kral spoke to her, *I suppose it would not hurt.*

Gris took a deep breath, and looked down before looking up once again.

“Who should go first?”

There was silence for a short while, with nothing to be heard by either of the two in the central plaza except for the crackling flames spread first by the dragon. Kral was looking into Gris.

“...I suppose I can lead, then!” Gris finally said.

Gris opened her mouth and sang a couple notes, nothing horribly impressive but still pleasant to listen to. Once finished, she looked back to Kral.

“Your turn!”

The dragon blinked and rose his head with little indication of any kind of impression, though this was immediately met to the protest of Gris.

“I will not be able to hear you sing,” she explained, “my ears are bad.”

Kral looked down at her in mild confusion.

Surely just a few feet higher would make no difference? he asked her.

Gris shook her head and made a few gestures with her hands.

“It does!” She affirmed.

Truthfully, Gris had rather excellent ears- in fact, some of the best in the former village of Thalun. In this moment, all she truly actually wanted was the mouth of the fury to open close to her. These thoughts, carefully kept hidden from the dragon, otherwise may have caused Kral to reconsider partaking in the singing contest.

If it does make such a difference... Kral lowered his head back down towards Gris.

Gris politely put her hands behind her back in anticipation of the fury dragon’s song. Kral the fury dragon opened his mouth to sing, and Gris immediately grabbed the glass jar in her back pocket and threw it into the mouth of the monster that destroyed her village. She immediately scurried backwards, almost falling in the process.

Kral, bewildered and angered at this development, immediately let out a roar, and summoned the black flames around himself once more. However, much to his own shock, within the fury dragon’s own mouth these dark flames also erupted. Kral had just set himself on fire.

Gris, narrowly dodging the orbs of black flame sent towards her, continued to back away from the dragon. Kral, enraged, began to chase towards her instead.

What have you done to me?! The dragon cried within her head, *What have you done?!*

What Gris had done was toss a poorly reinforced jar of acetone into the mouth of the dragon purely on a hunch.

Though the inceptor flame was unlike normal fire in that those blessed with fire magic could not conjure nor control it, it was certainly possible that it could catch on acetone. Having it within her pocket only by coincidence- she was polishing her muddied shoes when the flames had begun- the mere

thought it could prove useful drove her to challenge a fury dragon to something as silly as a singing contest.

Kral ceased summoning more black flames to attack Gris, and started to fruitlessly chase after her instead. All summoning more of this black fire had done to him was grow the fire now eating at the fury dragon's very existence. The chase continued to outside of the village, where Kral's maddening thoughts continued to force themselves into Gris's mind. Needing to ensure she did not run into any trees, Gris turned fully around and began running desperately away from the monster.

This chase continued for some time, with ceaseless insults and furious panic from Kral. The dragon, in running after Gris, had managed to set a large portion of the woods surrounding the former village Thalun alight with his flaming body. While unlikely to cause permanent harm, there would definitely be fewer trees in the forest for now.

Several minutes passed, and the cries of the fury dragon were growing weaker, and farther away. Soon, the demands for explanation stopped completely, but Gris kept running. For more than half a mile after the fury stopped crying she continued to run, until she tripped over a stray root in the forest.

Fortunately, Gris was wearing long pants and not severely hurt by her tumble. In fact, the abrupt ceasing of running after doing so for a good while arguably was what caused her more pain. Exhausted, she flipped herself over and on to her back. With a little bit of a struggle, she managed to grab the trunk belonging to the wretched tree whose root had tripped her. After dragging herself closer to it, Gris managed to lift herself enough to lay against the trunk. Still breathing heavily, she closed her eyes.

Perhaps Thalun could have its own story after all! Gris thought to herself.

Yes, what a wonderful idea! Thalun, though not even a petty village any longer, could now join all the other stories that had lived within its library. Even greater, this story truly would have a hero within it as well!

Gris smiled to this thought, and then she began to snore.

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