

Man-God. Still, I believed he would put his life on the line to defend the princess. It wasn't like being the Man-God's disciple made you his loyal puppet or anything. I knew from experience how it worked—the slippery little jerk would give you all sorts of advice that *seemed* helpful, only to betray you at the very last moment.

In other words, the Man-God's disciples were usually his victims. Even good, honest people could be misled by his lies. It wasn't Luke's fault he had an evil god manipulating him. That made me very hesitant to even consider killing him. Apart from everything else, he was a key member of Ariel's faction who'd provided her with all sorts of support over the years. He'd still have a crucial role to play, even after she became queen.

Of course, the Kingdom of Asura wouldn't be helping Orsted in his quest for another hundred years. Luke would be dead by then either way, so maybe his fate wasn't that significant. Still, it had to be important for Ariel to be an *effective* queen, right? Having Luke around might help her maneuver things in the right direction...

Well, maybe. Or maybe this was one of those fixed “turning points” in history. In other words, if Ariel became queen, things would work out somehow. And if the First Prince took the throne instead, we were headed for a bad end no matter what.

The idea still seemed really odd to me. Reality *had* to be more complicated than a scripted video game, right?

At the end of the day, I had to rely on Orsted's knowledge about this stuff. And it was hard to say if he would ever give me a complete explanation of things. He'd never gone into much detail about the crucial events that would occur a century from now. I'd pressed him once about the Man-God's claim that his actions would “destroy the world,” and he'd simply said, “That is a possibility, to be certain.”

Honestly, killing the Man-God seemed to be the only thing that mattered to Orsted. I didn't get the sense he cared about what came after that. And at the moment, I couldn't afford to worry about what might happen a hundred years down the road. I had my hands full keeping my family safe in the present. Was that irresponsible? Shortsighted? Yeah, probably. Couldn't bring myself to care, though. The people living in the future could deal with their own problems.