**Return to Rutyr**

Ten years have passed since the establishment of Ordor. The city sports houses on the inside of the walls and sprawling farmland all around the outside. Wooden houses are in the process of being reconstructed as stone, multi-leveled buildings to handle the massive increase in population. Ordor is quickly becoming the trade hub of Nevoria, as the collective land west of the Dundyran Peaks and east of the Rutyr Barrier is called. The stone doors have been replaced with gigantic wooden ones. They soar, like the towering walls, higher than the ancient forest trees.

Within the castle, King Ruku and the Builders tend to daily tasks. Reports of production, of trade, of Elemental activity. Ruku still pushes for examination and exploration of the Barrier over Rutyr, but the Builders are hesitant to put any resources towards such a task. Living things can pass in, but never back out. Even getting near is like teetering on the edge of an impossibly tall cliff. In his time alone, Ruku begins to develop a technique to bypass this.

Ruku crafts a human-sized golem out of sticks, leaves, and grass. It is static, but with his Aura bound to its matter, he’s able to move the mass. Initially, he would need to be within arm’s reach to manipulate the golem. As he practices, he finds he can go further and further. The more his Aura bound to it, the easier it becomes. However, manipulation still takes nearly all of his focus. Pressing further into his focused state, Ruku is able to see through the golem. Hearing comes too, but senses beyond that are outside of Ruku’s ability.

After a few years of heavy practice, Ruku is able to enter a meditative state from his throne to control the golem remotely. He is able to move outside the walls of Ordor and even use Aura from the golem. The Builders approve of Ruku using the golem to explore the barrier, as damage to the golem poses no risk to Ruku himself. The King journeys west in springtime. The increased distance requires more focus, and Ruku can only hold on for half a day before having to release it.

Standing before the barrier, only just able to hang on to the connection, Ruku’s vision blurs as the golem steps through. The King disconnects from the golem, taking a few breaths before attempting to reach out again. Suddenly, it is easier than ever to control the golem. Ruku feels Aura flowing back through the connection, empowering him. The interior of the barrier is inundated with Aura! Not only disallowing living things to exit, the barrier seems to be a one-way passage for Aura as well.

After a few days of moving further west, Ruku finds the human settlement Vitran. Nature has taken over far faster than he imagined. Only crumbled walls remain, low grass denoting the once busy roads. At the back is the collapsed shelter. Ruku cannot bear the sight of a bony hand at the site, and runs north to the Scraplands. Nature has spread here, too, but chunks of metal still spike from the ground, and a rocky landscape takes over towards the interior.

Here, Ruku finds the Demon Tablet. Under the metallic overhang, it still sits, humming. Nearby it, though, is a campfire sporting a blazing blue flame. As Ruku nears, he spots a corpse that brings him to his knees. Nith’s bones sit at the back of the cave. The unnatural flames flicker, and the Demon Tablet clicks and hums louder for a moment. Ruku is pulled from his mourning by this. The flame roars a bit brighter and the Tablet goes quiet. Ruku understands, leaving to track down Wren.

After a few days of exploration, Ruku meets a curious Elemental. He is about to attack until the Elemental speaks. It says it is named Miko. The Elemental looks like a Fire Elemental, but is much brighter, and more controlled. It says it was once a human trapped in the barrier, and was consumed by an Elemental. He finds himself inside the body of an Elemental now. Miko asks if Ruku is like him, to which the king says no. Ruku explains his situation, and asks if Miko has seen a Demon, very tall in black armor. Miko confirms he has, but only from a distance.

Ruku and Miko explore the barrier over the next few days. Miko states his goal is to escape the barrier, to experience his homeland of Gunudyr again. Ruku says he should visit Ordor some time, to see him in the flesh. The two track down Wren, who seems to be attempting to get near Nith’s fire and the Demon Tablet. When he nears, though, he cries out in pain and is forced to flee. Ruku and Miko briefly engage Wren in combat, but are outclassed and barely able to force him away.

A few weeks have passed, and Ruku has begun to show increased aging in his human body. The Builders express concern but he waves it off. When connecting again, Ruku finds his golem walking. He asks Miko why he’s walking, and Miko is confused. They figure it out eventually: The golem has begun to move and speak when Ruku is not connected. Ruku figures the Aura within the barrier must be affecting it. He posits that as Aura continues to condense in the dome, he and Miko may be able to take on Wren.

The duo return to the Scraplands and train together for a week. By now, Ruku’s real body is heavily deteriorating. In just a month, he has aged greatly. From just having the whispers of gray in his rich brown beard, he now has grayed fully. The medics of Ordor are in a panic to heal him, and the Builders have grown furious at his lack of communication as to the situation in Rutyr. All Ruku can do once he breaks the connection for the day, is retire to his bedroom. In the morning he wakes, sits on the throne, and reconnects.

Miko reports that the golem has been talking exactly like Ruku, and has been acting tirelessly, as an Elemental would. Ruku is heavily disturbed by this, feeling as if he is taking over a separate being more than ever. He stuffs the feelings down, though, killing Wren and destroying the Tablet is more important than anything. Nearby the two’s campsite, the Demon Tablet hums louder and louder.

Wren attacks suddenly one day, as Ruku is just disconnecting. Hastily, he attempts to reconnect, but finds his path blocked. He catches glimpses of combat, the golem’s body moving. Its mind must have grown strong enough to resist his hold, and he gives out. Miko and the golem fend off Wren, but the battle results in extreme amounts of Aura being produced. The three are breathing in latent Aura and multiplying it with every attack. While usually spread out into the atmosphere, the contained area of the barrier is making every burst of flame or outgrowth of vines explosively powerful. Wren, with only brute strength, is finding himself pressed.

The Demon escapes, but Miko and Ruku pursue quickly after him. The air is boiling with Aura. Light bends and organisms begin to blend together. Wren is able to use the confusing effect to land a solid hit on the golem. Though Wren is not well-versed in Aura usage, the inundated setting allows him to take control of a decent amount. As the golem repairs itself, it falters as Wren’s Aura interferes. Miko takes the initiative and holds off Wren, but Ruku’s golem yells out as it is corrupted by the Demonic Aura. Its plantlife turns black and dark red, withering, and the golem falls down, dead.

Miko dashes to the corpse’s side, but as he touches it, his body blends with it in the Aura-soaked atmosphere. Miko’s form is overtaken by roots and vines. Wren attacks, but the combined Elemental strikes first. Like lightning, Miko’s arm reaches out and tears off Wren’s. The Demon screams in pain, retreating. Miko’s form is completely unstable, his edges are blurring into the air. As the sun reaches its highest peak, the Elemental glows brilliantly, blindingly.

Miko’s Aura spreads out, forming a pillar of light around him. It rises and impacts the top of the barrier, sending tremors through the ground. His yells can be heard as it takes every ounce of strength to control the immense amount of Aura. Wren looks up and sees the pillar beginning to move. It’s tilting, pointing further downward. Towards him. He begins to flee, but as the pillar grows in width it becomes clear that it is in vain. All the Aura in the barrier is flowing inward, towards Miko.

The blinding light suddenly ceases, and Wren turns to look. Miko stands still, his hands pointed upwards. He tilts them down to point at Wren. The Demon grabs a nearby stone in panic. Instantly, a beam of searing light envelops him. As his flesh scalds and armor plating vaporizes, Wren pours Aura into the stone. Every last bit, every essence, something to survive and live on. The stone flies away in the chaos. Wren collapses as he feels his body burn away. As consciousness fades, he hopes.

The barrier falls as Miko blasts a hole in the side of it. The ensuing earthquake and blast of debris is called the Eruption by the Ordori. A long scar of burned land becomes The Scorch. Ordor is first impacted by this, but has greater issues to tend to. Ruku has fallen ill, and is dying. Medics work all day to infuse his Aura, but it’s being sapped somehow. Unable to vocalize, he passes quietly in the night. The Builders spend weeks mourning him, and discuss how to move forward.

Miko stands in the newly released Rutyr plains, the condensed Aura spreading into the atmosphere. His body is now made of burning plants that grow, die by flame, and sprout anew. Near where he stands, Nith’s fire has snuffed out. The Demon Tablet hums loud, and Miko walks near it. It begins to produce another Demon. Mimicking the barrier, but smaller, Miko surrounds the Tablet with a shield of his own Aura. He sits next to the burnt out fire, and relights it.