

The Legend of Freshbeast

Excerpt taken from Chapter 2 in The Three Houses by Elise Nelson

There were three spirits who broke into the world that day, seeping deep into the earth and branching out beneath the surface. An entire elemental system sparked to life like the fire of Prometheus. Each of the three Spirits of Terra formed into embodied existence in the blink of an eye, every one of them in different locations on the Earth. The one who rose up from fire and ash, wrought with raw talents, strength, and passion beyond any mortal capability, became known as Vaellor, the eventual creator of the house of Freshbeast.

The sun was still new the day he stepped forward and appeared to the humans. Its rays were so strong it left his newly formed tongue dry with the taste of dirt. From the moment his mind sparked into this new state of being, he was flooded with every emotion, desire, passion, and pain known to mankind. It all flashed before him like looking directly into the sun after a lifetime inside a cave, each sensation attached to an image or memory he never created.

Gasps and stifled cries hummed around him as Vaellor stepped out into this strange world he now inhabited—this lively planet filled with such beauty and chaos that it made him want to scream.

Need to scream.

But he didn't.

When his wildly rattling mind tremored down into his lungs, he opened his eyes, mouth prepared to let some of this madness out, and he saw their faces. Nearly a hundred of them. All staring, gaping, wide-eyed in horror at this strange beast of a person rising from the shadows. It was at this moment that Vaellor realized just how different he was from all of them. While these human creatures all stood around the same size, most of them lean and angular, he was closer in height to some of the trees in this forest they called their home, with a stature to match. He looked down at his hands and then down at the humans'. He could sense the fear pumping through their veins as he approached, closer and closer to their homes, and to them—too frozen to move.

With each step, the ground shivered, quietly booming, as if the Earth itself were stifling a cry from the beast. He frowned. *I don't understand why they fear me so....* He searched their eyes and saw in them so much more than they saw in themselves. He saw their potential. Their wants. Their desires. Their strengths and weaknesses. And things he didn't quite understand. Things he couldn't relate to.

As he continued through the quiet village, his confusion grew. Then one of them spoke.

"You are the one who is...strength and...passion?"

Vaellor turned to the source of the voice. His eyes fell upon a human male much smaller than many of the others. The slightly hunched elderly man —by far the eldest in the group—looked at the beast-like spirit pensively. His eyes were soft and clear, and he radiated with the confidence and ease the others all seemed to lack. Vaellor's brow furrowed further. "And of passion," the man continued, shifting his weight against the polished stick propping up his frail form. *This man...the only one unafraid to speak.* He watched the small man in awe. "...and of so much more," he finished. When he did, the others looked at him, confusion lining their foreheads. Then many of them looked up at the mysterious being taller than their houses, studying his muscles the size of boulders and the frizzy hair dropping past his shoulders.

Finally, another one of them spoke, but this time it was directed at the frail figure still staring at Vaellor. "What are you talking about, Nicholas?" a woman asked, keeping her eyes locked on the elder.

Nicholas' stare remained fixed on the being—this spirit with such a physical form you'd never know he wasn't mortal, if he wasn't so enormous. He cleared his throat and shifted his gaze to the woman. "It is a long story," he began, creeping towards her with his walking stick, "But it's a tale that must be told." He stopped and smiled, turning his gaze to the sky wistfully, "Oh...I must have been about seventeen. I learned of books. Small packages that held stories bound between covers, inked within pages. I'd never heard of such a thing as these before. Even now, they are scarce, and many of you may have never seen one...but I got to. I was taught letters, and that there were people who recorded stories and legends on these things. They were hard to decipher, as every letter was a bit different to every writer, but I learned of stories that were told by elders at the beginning of everything—a time not much older than my father's father." His eyes darted back to Vaellor. "And I think I learned about you."

There were a few whispers and gasped, but Nicholas just stared at the being with thoughtful eyes. "I learned that there were a few books created that all said similar things. That there were parts of the world we didn't understand. Things called 'elements' and things like that. I learned that one day—as the legend had it—color would be added to the world. I don't mean blue or green, or anything like that, as you all know we have those already. I mean *true* color, given to us by beings from off these mortal grounds. They would bring unseen gifts we hadn't yet had the privileges of receiving. I learned that the world wasn't where it was supposed to be yet—that more life would be given to it. I never understood these things—or even really learned that they were more than just folktales—until today."

"But how did you know these were true?" a man with light hair asked.

"And how did you know it was this being?" the first woman asked.

The corner of Nicholas' mouth turned up in a smile. "Well...I didn't know they were true. I was just fascinated by them. And...as you all well know...I am at the end of my life. I was at peace knowing I'd lived a good life—and I *did* have a good life. I just didn't know how bright life could be."

“What are you talking about?” a teenage boy in the crowd asked impatiently, his mother nudging him with a hush.

The man just smiled. “Well, I never knew these stories I was so fascinated with as a youth were true. And I had made my peace with the fact that I would never know. But today...I woke with a start. Something flooded through me—something came alive. Something inside me awoke. It was as if I’d lived my life in black, white, and grays, and I was seeing color for the first time. Feeling warmth and light for the first time. My heart soared, and my body felt better than it ever had in my entire life. It was just a flicker of a moment, but I still feel it now, and it may keep me alive just a little while longer.”

There was silence all around them, other than the rustling of leaves in the wind-blown trees. “But what does all of this mean?” one of the villagers asked.

“There has been an awakening in the Earth. Something has always been missing—quite a lot, actually, from what I’ve gathered today,” he looked over at Vaellor once more and continued, “And I believe there is still so much more I don’t know anything about. I just know that you, sir, are one of those beings, and there is a lot we don’t know that you need to teach us.” More gasps than ever before filled the crowd, and whispers amongst the villagers grew louder and louder like a growing fire until everyone was loudly talking to the others.

Nicholas didn’t see any reason to quiet the crowd. He watched their widened eyes and rapid speech, which pooled out of them like water spilling from a jug, as they all came to terms with what all of this meant. He knew it was a lot to take in, and he wasn’t sure of all of it himself—he didn’t know what was truth and what was speculation or folly. He didn’t know how much to believe and what to throw out from his mind. He wasn’t sure how anyone learned of these things to begin with, other than maybe in dreams. None of that really mattered, though, for as of now, they had much to learn, and Nicholas wanted to be there at the start before he passed on to whatever came next for mortal beings such as himself.

Everyone in the village was experiencing a different reaction from all of this new information, and Nicholas was the only one to be even a little calm about it all—even Vaellor’s stomach churned and eyes darted between each person as the magnitude of his mission finally settled upon him. His large stature was easy to see, so his expressions were consequently easy to read. He knew of passions and feelings beyond any mortal comprehension, but he didn’t know how to settle this crowd. He didn’t know how to teach these people how to use what they felt inside to create beauty—beauty they never knew they could create. He had so much knowledge and power with no sense of how to teach it.

Somehow, the old man could tell he needed to intervene. He wobbled over to the large immortal man and placed a hand on his large leg. The moment he did, the crowd went still. Some people wouldn’t even utter a breath. Nicholas smiled softly once more and then looked from Vaellor to the people gathered before him. “He will teach us great things, and I am lucky enough to be alive to help us all begin.”

It took more than a few days to start this grand task. They were about to embark on a journey like

the world had never seen before, but they didn't have the knowledge to fully grasp it. At first, Nicholas worked on bridging the gap between the villagers' way of life and the way Vaellor wanted to start. He wanted to get right to it—to show the humans what they'd been missing and what they were capable of. The strengths, power, beauty, and passions, and so much more. He wanted to show the person in the crowd with the rhythmic movements that she could use what she so evidently loved to put a story into dance with no need for words. He wanted to show the power love had to the man so guarded he would barely look at the satin-haired woman he could never resist glimpsing at more than ten times per day.

As the days wore on, he also wanted to teach how you could build up strength and muscle to lift things they'd never known were possible. He wanted to show them how to protect themselves and use the fire and passions in their hearts to protect their loved ones and their people. There was so much chaos, and he so desperately wanted to teach them how to utilize all these powers inside of them. He just couldn't get through to them without terrifying each and every one of them.

This is where Nicholas stepped in. Over the course of a few days, and then weeks, he taught the people everything he learned from the stories from long ago and how Vaellor would teach them things that would make life worth living in even the darkest of times. He would teach them to utilize these phenomenal gifts that they were still lacking understanding of. Ultimately, the elderly man knew Vaellor would have to take over from there, which is where a lot of his focus lay with the being.

Essentially, he taught Vaellor how to be human. He taught him that the people of the village would be scared if he went about things a certain way. He taught him that he had to be softer than his first reactions tended to be. He needed to show the people he wasn't something—*someone*—to be afraid of. If they were afraid, they might be too paralyzed to partake in the lessons (or be unable to process them if they did work up the courage to show up and try).

It was an arduous process, but soon, everything aligned. The people were ready to listen without fear, and Vaellor learned how to respect their fears and show them how to understand it. As his life on Earth proceeded, the overwhelming emotions that first consumed him settled in his being in a way he could tolerate. It only took him a matter of days to process everything and learn what he needed to, but it took the rest of the time to learn how to put the humans at ease and be receptive.

Slowly, even Vaellor's appearance softened. Although he was still bulky and strong, his newly eased nature made him less frightening--his face less strained, his shoulders less tense, and his posture not so wild and chaotic. He didn't intimidate the others anymore, which only aided him in his endeavours. Over the first few weeks, he started truly enjoying working with the humans, teaching them how to use the music in them to create stories into songs, poems, and dances; how to utilize their physical strengths and passions; and how they could use their various emotions and feelings to create beauty in a variety of ways. The lessons continued, and he gradually taught them more and more skills and ideas. As he did, the gap between them as friends disappeared.

Vaellor enjoyed this new life with the humans. At first, he struggled with the thought of living among these strange mortal beings, but the urge to help them soon took over. He saw their potential when he came into the world, and he saw what he could give them--what he could show

and teach them. He learned that they weren't just creatures that were small and afraid. They had such spark inside of them. Such life. Passion seemed to flow right through them without them even realizing it. He helped them understand the arts, and he joined in with them when they asked to sing songs by the fire each night.

He loved learning more and more about them, and he loved to watch them pick up what he learned. With each new feat they accomplished, his motivational fire was lit even brighter. One day, Vaellor raced around the forest with some of the adults in the village. He was teaching them skills of evasion and stealth. He taught them how to run and hide from enemies, and how to keep safe and be quick. But he was having trouble showing them the final piece of what they needed to know. He couldn't think of how to show them the final, key piece in what they were missing. Until something stopped him dead in his tracks.

While the villagers continued running through the trees around him, Vaellor couldn't turn away. It was almost like looking into a mirror, but the reflection didn't show his face. It was more of a feeling. An emotional connection that gave him the missing piece. A kindred connection with a creature in the forest. He walked closer to it, and as he did, he realized that it was a stag, strong and bold, standing its guard just a few feet away. It wasn't scared of them. It faced its fears head-on, despite any odds. This is what he needed to teach them. This was the missing piece. Not only did they need to learn to evade their enemies and stay hidden when attacked, they needed to learn to stand their ground and be strong and brave. No matter what.

A few months went by before Vaellor was interrupted during one of his archery lessons by a small girl running over to him with arms waving in the air. He stopped his lesson and waited for her to tell them what was going on. The girl's curled locks drooped down her face as she caught her breath. "It's Nicholas," she said, panting, "Come quick." Vaellor's heart sunk into his stomach. He immediately dropped his bow and arrow and bolted to the man's home, his mind feverish the entire way there.

Thought after thought raced through his mind, but in the end, the worry he couldn't shake was that he'd be too late to see his good friend one last time. Then finally, he saw it. Nicholas' small little home, tucked quietly between trees. The home the old man brought him on his first day of life on Earth.

Upon entering the hut, he saw the withered man frailer than ever. His heart sunk into his stomach and tears burned his eyes. This man was his friend. He was unafraid when faced with his initial frenzied state. He taught him how to assimilate to Earth without destroying the mission he was destined to perform. Without Nicholas, Vaellor wasn't sure if he'd ever been able to understand humans well enough to teach them all he knew. At the very least, it would have taken Vaellor years to get to the point he was at now in his understanding of humans. They were more than children who needed guidance—they were friends who accepted him, despite their differences.

He crept to the man's bedside and knelt down to look into his eyes. Nicholas' eyes—once so clear—were foggy and unable to open all the way, but he saw his friend and gave a hint of that same smile he gave him on Day One.

“My friend,” he whispered, too weak and tired to move more than a hand. “I’m glad I got to see you one last time.”

Emotion welled within Vaellor, spiking through his body like a scattered bout of electric shocks. A lump formed in his throat and it took all the composition he had in him to not let out a sob. They looked at each other with silent understanding until Nicholas spoke up again, voice still small.

“You can do great things for this people,” he said, patting Vaellor’s large hands with his shriveled ones, “I’m just sorry I won’t be around to see it.”

A tear rolled its way down Vaellor’s cheek as he replied, “Thank you for letting me in.”

The man smiled. “Of course. Thank you for coming.”

With that, the man’s eyes dulled and his spirit moved on to a place Vaellor knew he could visit him again—just not in this mortal world.

He cast his eyes down at the man’s small hands and choked back tears. When he first arrived in this village, he hadn’t fully grasped how such powerful emotions, power, and strength could ever be used for bad. He felt all the potential powers and emotions of humans as he came into being, and he saw flashes of vibrant images of greatness, all at the hands of humans with the abilities he would help them hone. He loved the way humans could be wild and free and that they were stronger than he would have thought. However, this understanding was faulty and problematic, and it didn’t match with the behaviors of the humans in the village when he first made contact with them.

Nicholas was the one who helped him understand. He helped him understand the follies of mankind and the way humans worked on a regular basis. From that, he was able to understand how to properly teach them how to use these abilities. He would teach them about them with some caution, but ultimately it would be up to these faulty mortals to choose what to do with them. Through Nicholas’ reassurance, Vaellor knew it would be okay—that all he had to worry about was teaching men and women what lied within them and how to use it. Then they would have to do the rest.

As humans made more sense to the immortal man, he began to sympathize with their struggles. However, it wasn’t until Nicholas’ passing that he was able to truly *empathize* with them. Such strong emotions ploughed through him, and even though he understood all of it and had such great power and insight—far greater than any human—it was still difficult for him to reconcile loss. To grieve without a part of him shutting down in some way. This was the final lesson Nicholas taught him.

As he walked back into the village that day, Vaellor readied himself to tell his companions of their friend’s passing. Out of all the lessons he’d taught them so far, this would be the first time he’d share in their struggle. His appearance had become more human throughout the entire process, but now he was becoming more human on the inside too.

There was still so much to teach them, but on that day, he let himself just be their friend.

He'd have the rest of his existence to teach mankind their strengths. He could take one day off.

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