

The Shaedon Resurgence

Book 1

The Fall of Netherea

Jeffrey Debris

*“And there they patiently lurked,
Inside the abyss,
Awaiting their resurgence.”*

– Excerpt from the Book of Luminar Prophecies

Chapter 1 – Harvest Moon

A mild breeze blew over the withered ground. Amidst the arid and dead earth, a plot of land was teeming with life. Plants and crops flourished all over it; the air was heavy with the smell of rich earth and fresh vegetables. At the centre stood a huge podlike plant, with roots weaving through the ground around it and vines covered in flowers, bulbs and fruit. The pod was slightly transparent and when studied closely, one could make out the shape of an embryonic creature under a thin layer of membranes. Next to it, roots had shot up into the air to form a cross from which a creature was hanging, its body largely entangled by vines. The breeze made it dangle in the wind. The creature wore a large-brimmed straw hat with a fairly tall crown that had snapped at the top. Its head hung down; it looked immensely tired. Its face was covered with a thin leathery skin under which roots were faintly visible, closely resembling veins. Dungarees and a simple white linen shirt that was covered with dirt and grass stains hung loosely from its wiry, slender body.

It closely resembled a scarecrow, and it looked as if no one had tended to it in a long time.

In the distance, a small flock of birds circled in the sky, but they did not come close to the field with the pod, scarecrow and crops on it. After a short while, one of the birds broke away and descended towards the field. With its wings spread wide, it glided down and landed on the right shoulder of the scarecrow, who slowly raised his head to face his guest.

"You've returned? I wondered when you would be back," the scarecrow said tiredly to the bird.

It had a pitch-black coat with a purple sheen; its feathers were decorated with intricate glyphs. Its eyes burned with an intense purple fire. The bird shook itself briefly, releasing a few loose feathers that slowly

drifted to the ground, then it made a sound as if it were clearing its throat.

"There's a storm approaching, Grummus. We'll be in the middle of it in about an hour."

Grummus looked up to the heavens, where dark clouds obscured the sky in the distance. Flashes of lightning warned them for the approaching storm.

"Yet another test of my resolve, but I will not disappoint the Elders. I've come too far already, Tryu."

"Only a few more days before your Rite of Ascension comes to an end. Do you have the strength to withstand this storm, my student?" Tryu asked with some concern in his voice.

"I can't back down now..." Grummus' sentence trailed off in a heavy sigh.

"Try to stay focused. You have survived ninety-seven days. Only three left and it'll all be over. I guarantee you have passed the test so far. You've faced worse trials in the past months than this. You'll make it. I have confidence in you."

Grummus stretched his arms. The roots he was entangled with started to shift and he grunted as he drew magical energy from the earth. In a matter of seconds, barbed roots shot out of the ground in a small circle around him and the pod, twisting to form a dome that would protect them both from harm. Just before the dome closed at the top, Tryu took to the sky and flew off towards an abandoned cottage that was located on a hill at the far end of the acre.

"Good luck, my student!" he cried as he flew off.

The abandoned cottage on the hill had been a refuge for Tryu for some time. It looked plain, with the exception of the front door, which was made of elementium and hadn't been affected by the decay the building had suffered at all. Tryu flew in through one of the many shattered windows and looked for a place to find shelter against the oncoming storm. The interior was a complete mess; most of the furniture was broken and a thick layer of dust and broken glass covered the floor. Some things seemed to be quite out of the ordinary to Tryu: there was a

generator that still looked functional and a workbench with a variety of tools that had not been affected by the cottage's decay. Tryu suspected that whoever had lived here before the cottage was abandoned was not a simple farmer. More likely it had been some sort of mechanic or engineer.

Tryu scanned the room, looking for a place to hide. Despite the fact that he was inside now, he didn't feel safe. The cottage walls were so worn down that the wind still managed to get through the cracks. When the storm would hit the cottage, not only Grummus would be tested, Tryu realized.

Directly next to the workbench and the generator stood a small safe. It looked like its contents were taken in a hurry, because the door was still open and nothing of value was left inside. It had been bolted to the floor to prevent anyone from taking it easily. He wondered why he hadn't noticed it during his earlier visits, but he figured that he hadn't been looking for a place to hide before. Tryu decided that the safe would literally and figuratively speaking be the safest hiding place. Content with his new shelter, Tryu decided to head back to the window through which he had entered the cottage and sit on the windowsill until the storm would get too close. He looked worriedly at the dome of roots across from him on Grummus' patch of land. After considering the whole situation, he decided to head back inside and rest while it was still possible.

Tryu had barely fallen asleep when he was rudely woken up by the thunderstorm. The cottage walls were trembling because of the harsh winds and the roof leaked heavily. He was glad he had chosen the safe as his refuge, as the floor was now littered with even more broken glass, tools and other items that had fallen from tables, shelves and cupboards. He knew exactly how much time had passed and to his dismay, the storm would last for another two hours. He worried for his student, who was only protected by a layer of barbed roots.

Grummus grunted as each gust of wind shook the dome, draining his energy. He clenched his teeth as he tried to keep the dome intact, thanking the Earth Mother that the storms on this planet didn't have blizzards with shards of ice that could cut through anything. He had heard of planets where such storms were common, but it did not make Saridia any more of a hospitable place. The Rite had been quite a challenge so far, but no worse than the stories that he had been told by his fellow Scarowyn. *Three more days, three more days*, he kept repeating in his mind. Meanwhile, he had to stay focused on the roots extending above him, as they protected him and the pod. During his early training, Grummus had mastered most of the basic spells quickly and despite the fact that his mentor had never told him, he had been quite impressed with Grummus' talent for magicka. Grummus remembered the days of his training, just before he started the Rite. He found comfort in those memories as he faced the storm, remembering the sheer beauty of Wyngaya, its great forests, his home. It was where he was raised to become what he had desired most. The Scarowyn were a peaceful race who lived as one with their environment. They had only a single purpose in life: to become Earthmasters, heal worlds damaged by greed and pollution and allow their inhabitants a second chance. Now he was stuck here, in the middle of a storm.

The strain on his body had become less over the past few minutes. Grummus had spent so much time in deep thought that the storm had passed. He released his grip on the roots for a short moment to check the sky. It was still a dark gray, but the storm had passed. Slowly he released the roots and let them retreat back into the earth, disentangling themselves from one another. The vines that held him up maintained their grip. Exhausted, Grummus let himself hang for a while, his head slowly tilting down as he drifted off into a deep, well-deserved sleep.

The sun slowly rose over the field. Tryu was sitting on the windowsill, looking out at the ravaged crops. He felt relieved, seeing his student and the pod unscathed. Everywhere lay debris the storm had left behind. The cottage was a little bit worse for wear after the storm had raged

past, but the safe had done its job and kept Tryu unharmed. Tryu had taken some time to examine the cottage further and confirmed his suspicion that no simple farmer had lived here before it was abandoned. A filing cabinet had fallen over and spilled some of its contents; several complex documents and blueprints of high tech machinery had slid out of it. He could only guess what most of them were meant for, but he did understand that some were designs for weapons, implants and even parts for what seemed to be an android. Everything suggested that whomever had lived here had left in a hurry. The generator still seemed to be functional, despite the harsh winds and leaks in the ceiling. It wasn't until shortly after the storm that Tryu noticed how close the generator had been to a nearby pool of water. He considered himself more than just lucky when he noticed; there had been a few instances when he noticed sparks flying across the room. It was almost a miracle nothing worse had happened.

Casually, Tryu flew towards Grummus and landed on his student's right shoulder. He noticed Grummus had finally regained consciousness.

“Are you all right?”

“Still a bit weak, but I managed to get through,” Grummus replied, sounding exhausted.

“It looks like you guarded the Seed of Life quite well. Shame about the rest of the crops – they seemed to be doing so well the past few weeks...”

They both surveyed the field for a moment, noticing that all of the crops that had previously been growing and blooming lay scattered across the ground. All had been tattered and torn by the storm's might – all except the pod, which had been right underneath the dome.

“With a little luck, I'll have enough energy saved up by the end of the day to turn the tides,” Grummus said, looking around the field.

“It's not the most important part of your Rite, but the more fertile you manage to get this piece of land, the better your grade will be, of course. The bigger your chance of becoming a full-fledged Earthmaster,” Tryu replied with a sudden sternness.

“Yes, I know, but there are so very few minerals in this soil. It already cost me most of my reserves to maintain the dome during the storm. It’s a good thing the sun is shining today and the earth is still wet from the storm. That should help me recover.”

“I’m glad the storm didn’t get the better of you. You sound as positive as the day you started here! Although you sure smell a lot fouler,” Tryu joked, although there was some truth in it. Grummus hadn’t taken a proper bath in months and his smell was a combination of sweat, dirt and compost.

“Well, I bet you wouldn’t smell like roses either after hanging in one place for a hundred days in a row. Hmm, roses... Maybe I should try to grow a few of those to brighten this place up!” A contented smile appeared on Grummus’ face.

“Well, it would help to mask the stench!” Tryu replied.

“How much time do I have left, Tryu?”

“Exactly or approximately?”

“Exactly.”

“Two days, seventeen hours, twenty-five minutes and six seconds,” Tryu said without a trace of doubt in his voice.

The vines that entangled Grummus tightened their grip on him. A green glow emanated from the base of the roots. Raw magicka and minerals from the surrounding soil flowed through the roots and up towards Grummus. First, his feet started glowing with a green aura and in a matter of seconds, he was completely engulfed in the pulsating energy. As soon as the energy had been drained from the surrounding earth, the effect wore off and Grummus’ body absorbed it all. He looked at the field with a glint of determination in his eyes. “Time to get to work!”

The first Saridian sunbeams touched the land where Grummus was hanging on his stalk on the last day of his Rite. The mild breeze made him swing gently. His head hung low and when the breeze subsided, one could hear him snoring lightly. Tryu looked over the acre from one of the cottage’s windowsills. Because it was located on a hill, it gave him an excellent view of the fields. He proudly looked at his student’s

handiwork. The area was once again filled with crops, plants and flowers. The smell was pleasant to his nostrils. If he had told anyone about the raging storm that had ravaged the place a few days ago, no one would probably have believed him. Fresh vegetables and fruit grew close to the pod, which pulsed with life and gave off a yellowish green glow. Grummus was getting some well-deserved rest. Tryu couldn't recall seeing anything quite like this before, even though he had guided his fair share of students. This turn of events had proven once again just how talented the young Scarowyn was. He decided not to compliment his student too much on his efforts, to prevent them from getting to Grummus' head. Only one full day remained before the Elders would come to assess Grummus' efforts and end the Rite of Ascension. He knew that his student would pass with the highest possible grade. Grummus would get what he wanted and head down the path to become a true Earthmaster.

He left Grummus to rest and decided to join a flock of birds, which he had noticed just a moment earlier, to check the latest news. As far as he knew, there were no more storms approaching for the next few days, but he wanted to continue his routine of communing with the local birds and it didn't look like Grummus would be awake for the next couple of hours anyway. Tryu spread his wings and let the wind guide him once he had gained sufficient altitude. From above, Grummus' patch of land stood out against the surrounding environment, which was nothing but barren and dry land. Brown, gray and black were the only colours Tryu could see, not a single speck of green or blue. It would take decades before this land would be fertile again. Pollution caused by the Saridions' machines and technology had taken its toll on the environment. Like Grummus, Tryu had never understood the fascination with technology that was common in other races. He believed they had forgotten their ties to the natural elements because technology made everything convenient, but at what cost? Technology had made people lazy and set new standards for everyone in the galaxy.

Suddenly, Tryu realized how deep he had been in thought and noticed he had flown quite some kilometres since he had left Grummus. In the distance, he spotted a small village on the bank of a river bordered

by towering cliffs. Its centre featured a spaceport, capable of harbouring at least two freighter-class ships or several smaller ones. Tryu estimated the population to be about a thousand. He wondered why he had not seen it before, but the village was masked quite well by the cliffs enveloping it. He decided to take a closer look. The inhabitants were mostly Saridion, with a few exceptions. Tryu spotted a group of Gald businessmen, a few stray humans and even a Kraut lumbering about in its special environmental suit. The river bordering the village was fairly clean and a good source for fish, judging by the small boats floating around the nearby harbour. There were many small cottages along the river, probably belonging to fishermen. Further away from the village, Tryu noticed several farms. Despite the vicinity of the river, the farmers were having a hard time growing crops on the blighted lands; heavy machinery was deployed on their fields to increase fertility and purify the soil. Tryu wondered why a small place like this would have its own spaceport; it looked out of place and it wasn't like this location was out of reach of the bigger cities. Perhaps they had unique export products indigenous to this area. Whatever the reason, Tryu decided not to put too much thought into it and headed back to Grummus.

It wasn't too long before Tryu reached the borders of the field. He realized he had completely forgotten about the flock of birds close by, but he still wanted to link with them to check the weather and listen to what could probably best be described as gossip. He himself was a highly intelligent being, but the birds on this planet were sadly not. Being an Arlin allowed him to mentally bond with any type of bird, intelligent or otherwise. Whenever he joined the flock, he could draw on his mystical powers to link with them. He would then experience their thoughts, emotions and ideas. In groups like these, the thoughts were primitive and simple. *We are headed south for the change of seasons*, was one of the messages he had caught before. *A storm approaches*, a few days before the storm hit the field. This time around, there wasn't much worth listening to; a few birds complained about being hungry.

Releasing the bond with the birds was always the hardest part for Tryu. Especially when he was linked to simple minds, he would often find himself unable to simply break away. Luckily, he would always in-

stinctively snap out of the connection before he assimilated with the birds completely. At first he would feel a throbbing sensation in his skull and the longer he would maintain the bond, the heavier the throbbing would become, until it eventually turned into a stinging pain. Usually, this was enough to break the link and regain his own consciousness. He had never dared to maintain the link beyond that point. Before he broke it off this time, he caught the message that the birds were heading to the river to catch some fresh fish and rest. He envied them and wished he could join them. How glad he would be to be out of this place! Instead, he wished them a good journey, but he doubted the link worked both ways. He had never experienced proof of it at any rate.

After gliding on the wind for a while, he flew back down to the ground, where Grummus was waking up from his deep sleep.

“Tryu! Tryu, have you seen this?” Grummus yelled from his stalk at the beautifully coated bird approaching from the distance.

“You’ve been quite busy, I see. Good job,” Tryu said from the sky as he circled around the crops a few times to inspect his student’s work. He was impressed, but he didn’t want to give too many compliments.

“It was quite a lot of work, but I think I’ve really outdone myself,” Grummus said with a proud look on his face, fishing for more compliments.

Tryu decided to ignore it. “I’ve just flown out a fair bit to check on the weather for tomorrow. As far as I can tell, your last day should be a good one.”

“Good. After the last storm, I’m not sure I can withstand much more...” Grummus said, relieved to hear the news. “So, how much longer?” he asked impatiently, raising an eyebrow at his mentor.

“Seventeen hours, twenty-five minutes and seven seconds.”

“That’s exactly what you said last time, minus two days! You’re just making this up, aren’t you?”

Tryu chuckled for a moment. “I assure you that I’m telling the truth. Your timing must be as impeccable as mine.”

“I don’t believe you,” Grummus replied stubbornly.

"It doesn't matter. I didn't make it up, I just answered your question truthfully. Whether you choose to believe it or not is your prerogative."

"How come you know the time down to the second? You don't have any hidden cybernetic implants, do you?"

"No, of course not. The Arlin have always been like this. We have a very strong understanding of time and space, which is why I can tell you the time down to the second. Just as you serve the Earth Mother, we worship Chronox, the God of Time. We believe that we were created by him and we serve him through space and time."

Grummus listened to Tryu's explanation with genuine interest, his mouth open as he took in all the information. "You learn something new every day, I suppose. Speaking of which, how come you are the only bird who dares to approach me? I mean, the other flocks didn't come closer than a kilometre, maybe."

"What does that have to do with what I just told you? We were talking about time." Tryu looked at his student, surprised he'd change the subject so fast. He did this more often than Tryu liked and it had a way of throwing him off guard a little.

"Well, I was just wondering... The others always stay so far away, like I'm some sort of monster."

"They are scared of you. I don't really know why, but you do resemble a scarecrow, hanging on that stalk like you do. It's your duty to protect the Seed and make its surroundings flourish – you should be glad they don't dare to approach."

"I suppose I can't blame them, but I've been hanging here for almost a hundred days now. It gets you thinking. Why am I doing this? Is this all worth it? Why do we even have these rituals and rites? It all seems so pointless to me..." Grummus sighed.

"You should be glad there are no Elders around. I'm sure this kind of talk would be enough to earn yourself a bad grade for your Rite," Tryu replied sternly.

"I know, I'm just getting a bit tired... I'm glad I'm almost done!"

As the words left Grummus' lips, the stalk suddenly loosened its grip on him. He hit the ground hard as he fell face down in the dirt below.

Tryu barely managed to jump from Grummus' shoulder, flapping his wings as fast as he could to break his own fall.

"Are you all right?" he screamed at his student, who lay motionless on the ground.

"Hnnggg," was the only answer coming from Grummus as he was recovering from the blow, his face still down on the ground. He slowly turned around to lie on his back, grunting while doing so, and took a few seconds to catch his breath.

"Is the Rite finished? You said I still had seventeen hours to go!"

Tryu was as surprised as his student. "I honestly have no idea," he admitted.

"No idea? You've guided many students before me, right?" Grummus sounded worried.

"Yes, but nothing like this has ever occurred. The stalk is supposed to maintain its strength until the Elders arrive through the portal," Tryu explained.

Grummus looked up at the stalk. It had completely withered in a matter of seconds; its top hung down to the ground, looking quite sad. As they looked around the field, they were confronted with an even more shocking sight: all of the crops and plants were losing their bright colours at an alarming rate. Grummus regained his composure, stood up straight and with all his might, tried to draw magicka from the surrounding dirt. Without the stalk's assistance, Grummus found it was much harder. He grunted as he focused deeply, but the results were far less than satisfactory.

"The ground is too barren, there's almost no minerals at all!" he exclaimed to no one in particular. He looked at his hands as if he would find an answer there. They were covered with lifeless dirt.

"Grummus, what's going on? What are you thinking about?" Tryu asked worriedly.

Grummus fell down on his knees, still staring at his hands. "Something's horribly wrong. I can't even save the stalk! I'm worthless," he screamed in frustration.

Tryu's eyes flashed as if something was affecting him as well, but as fast as the flashes came, they were gone. "You're right, Grummus. Time... something big... has happened..."

"I know, but what?" Grummus asked. He was glad that he wasn't the only one who was affected by the sudden events.

"That's the real question... I don't know... But something is disturbing the elemental balance greatly."

Grummus and Tryu both fell silent. Neither of them knew what to say. The field was still losing its vibrant colours; all the crops and plants were falling into decay. A pungent smell of rotting plants penetrated their nostrils.

"Grummus, look!" Tryu screeched.

"The Seed!" Suddenly, Grummus became aware of the urgency of the situation. "I have to protect the Seed, no matter the cost!" he shouted, with renewed confidence.

Tryu was glad that Grummus hadn't lost his morale, despite the grimness of the situation.

"We have to move it away from here. Whatever is sucking all the energy away from the land, we can't let it affect the Seed."

Grummus was sitting on his knees on the ground, running his fingers through the dirt as he focused his thoughts.

"Grummus, I'm afraid there's not much else we can do at this moment. We've gone through all of the options. There's no explanation for what's happened and staying here is not wise," Tryu said with worry in his voice.

"What about the Seed? We can't leave it here."

"It's more resilient than you think. Transportation might not be possible, it's rooted far too deep into the ground here. We can only move it if we could get some heavy machinery. Perhaps we can go the village that I discovered earlier for help? They might even know what caused this."

"Perhaps you're right," Grummus admitted reluctantly, too worried about the Seed's safety and ultimately his own fate.

"If I'm not here to protect the Seed, wild animals may try to eat it."

"That's highly unlikely – it's too large for any creature here to think it's edible. The wildlife around here only feeds on small vegetation and fruits," Tryu tried, hoping to comfort his student.

"Hmmp... Well, I agree, staying here is not really an option. We have to find out what happened. I can't even use Third Sphere spells."

Grummus reached for the brim of his hat and lifted it, revealing his blonde, strawy hair. He ran his fingers through it, then put the hat back on. "How far did you say the village was again?" he asked, hoping it wouldn't be too far away.

"I have never told you before. It is fifty-two point twenty-three kilometres away from here. Considering your walking speed, it should be about a day's travel, including rest."

"An entire day? I'm not that slow, am I?" Grummus replied, slightly agitated by Tryu's statement. "Perhaps not, but you will need rest every once in a while. This planet's not very hospitable, if you hadn't noticed. First things first, though: we need to prepare and make sure you're rested enough to travel. We should take a look inside the cottage, see if we can find anything of use."

"That hut full of junk?" Grummus frowned at his mentor.

Tryu looked back at him and shrugged. "Well, during the storm I found a few things there that are quite interesting. Did you know there's a fully functional generator inside, for instance? There might be other devices in there, perhaps even a communicator."

Grummus got up from the ground and started running towards the hill. "Well, what are you waiting for, Tryu? We don't have any time to waste."

Tryu spread his wings and flew after Grummus. "Now that's the spirit!" he shouted after his student.

Grummus opened the door of the cottage. It still struck him as odd, for it was in excellent condition and didn't fit the architectural style of the building at all. Tryu noticed the door was made of an elementium alloy, which explained why it had been able to withstand so much punishment while the rest of the cottage had started crumbling under the stress from the past storms. Why anyone would install an entry made of

such expensive material in such a decrepit hut was a mystery, but it was definitely designed to keep people out. Ultimately, the storms had caused its safety mechanisms to fail. Given the circumstances, that was a good thing.

“So, this is the place where you took shelter from the storm?” It was more of a statement than a question. Grummus took a peek inside and noticed all the broken equipment and wiring.

“This building is sturdier than you might think. It wasn’t inhabited by an ordinary farmer before it was abandoned. It’s a remote location, perfect for an engineer or inventor to perform experiments. No witnesses or uninvited guests.”

Grummus carefully went inside, noticing the workbench and the open safe. He grabbed a few blueprints and spread them out.

“Designs? Blueprints for weapons, tools, implants? You’re right, he was definitely not a farmer. What about these tools?”

He was surprised to find so much of this stuff left behind. Whoever had lived here before must have left in a hurry. Despite the huge mess inside, it was clear that someone had worked hard on various technological instruments here, undoubtedly an expert in engineering. Grummus had only taken a basic engineering course during his training; his people were not known for their technological knowledge, so he had wanted at least a basic understanding of things like these. The blueprints that lay before him were beyond his knowledge, but he could figure out the purpose of the designs.

“Is there anything in this room we might use for communication?” Tryu asked impatiently.

“No radio, no vidcom – it seems that whoever lived here didn’t want any contact with the outside world, or perhaps he had a personal communicator. I don’t even know what most of these machines are used for, I’m afraid.”

Grummus looked away from the workbench, hoping to find something that could be of use to him, but there was nothing in the room that could be used to contact the outside world. He found a few flasks lying around that might be of some use and some further searching net-

ted him a simple shoulder bag. "Have you seen any bottles or glass jars that aren't broken?" he asked Tryu as he put the flasks in his new bag.

"What do you need those for?"

"I need something to carry dirt in. What would an Earthmaster be worth without a fair amount of soil? It's what we feed on." Grummus turned his head to face Tryu and winked, but his mentor just shook his head and shrugged.

"Sorry, I forgot that's how you people nourish yourselves. I can't help it that most other biped species feed themselves by putting food in their mouths."

"No, you can't help it, but I'll have to survive the trip, won't I? The soil close to the Seed should have enough nutrients to get me there. You said the rest of the land was barren and blighted, right?"

"From what I've seen, there's nothing out there that supports life very well, I'm afraid. I'm just as frustrated as you are, Grummus. Sorry."

Grummus just nodded at Tryu as a way of accepting the apology. "Well, I'd better take a good helping of dirt with me, then. How was the soil around the village?"

"A lot better than here. The farmers were using machines to fertilize and purify the soil, with some degree of success. It was best around the banks of the river. There are fish living in it, which must be a good sign."

They searched the cottage a while longer, finding some small containers that were adequate for carrying dirt. Grummus stuffed everything in the bag and then headed outside. He looked back once, taking a last look at the mess, and wondered what in the name of the Earth Mother had happened here. If only he had taken advanced classes in engineering, he might've been able to put together some type of communicator. He felt far from comfortable leaving the Seed unprotected.

Back on the field, Grummus approached the Seed, took one of the containers from the bag and filled it with dirt from directly under the Seed. "This should keep me going for a while, I think," he said confidently.

“Let's head out, then. It's still early in the afternoon. With some luck, we might get there tomorrow morning,” Tryu said as he landed on Grummus' right shoulder.

Grummus gently touched the Seed. “Don't worry, little one. We'll be back soon, I promise.”

“Come, Grummus, it's time.”

Grummus looked up at his feathered friend and mentor. “I really wonder what has happened... Hopefully we can find out in the village.”

With a steady pace, they left the field. Grummus looked back one more time, praying to the Earth Mother to keep the Seed safe from harm.