Her Teacher Outside of Time

by ArnaudB

Summary

Edelgard watched her professor become an eldritch being in the Holy Tomb, the reincarnation of her most powerful and hated foe. Days and disasters passed since then. It's the first moment she can rest in a bed.

It's entirely unsurprising when yet another nightmare prevent her rest.

However it is no nightmare or dream. It's reality, in a realm outside of time.

One-shot. Edelgard met the new progenitor god.

A sense of exhaustion filled every part of her being and Eldegard knew that no nightmare could keep her awake tonight. The soon-to-be-empress fell in her bed, barely disrobed, for the first time since the disastrous events at Garreg Mach. Her ears vaguely picked up Hubert saying something before her awareness faded.

Darkness stretched in every direction and Eldegard knew she was no longer in the real world, the aches from the scars and exhaustion were gone and her body felt too light for this place to be anything but a nightmare she had hoped to escape.

Her professor sat on the throne of the Holy Tomb with the wall behind fading into darkness. The man was sprawled on the stone, staring down at her from the structure elevated on a series of step, his head titled and expression as unreadable as ever. Eldegard felt the conflicting emotions of love toward this beautiful person she stopped denying she had a crush on. This feeling alongside the hopeless dread from seeing the green hair and intend gaze betrayed the presence of the body-snatcher progenitor goddess within.

For a nightmare it was about as expected. Yet-
“Hello, Eldegard.” The greeting was simple as always, with the slight hint of warmth that made it sound so much like it had, on the morning before her professor sat on her hated enemy’s throne.

“Hello, my teacher,” Eldegard cautiously answered while drawing back on herself. There was no weapon at her side, but her hand found the dagger she had gotten long ago amid her clothing. Of course, it was a paltry weapon to fight the goddess. Memories of the recent disasters at Garreg Mach still plagued Eldegard’s mind, and she wasn’t surprised to see the being remain unaffected by the threat.

“Do you really want to fight in here?” It asked sounding so much like her professor scolding a student that usually wasn’t Eldgard.

“It’s probably pointless,” Eldegard admitted with a shrug. “But I don’t have a choice, do I?” The Eldritch mix of Byleth and Sothis had demolished her forces within the Holy Tomb, then essentially singlehandedly defeated the assault on Garreg Mach along with every trick and scheme her uncle’s worms had come up with. Eldegard held no illusion that the outcome would be any different in this nightmare. But even if she had never won in any of her dream, it wasn’t a reason to stop fighting. She’d do that when she was six feet under or scattered in ashes.

“I’d rather we have tea,” the mouth of her professor argued and Eldegard forced her heart to still at the familiar voice, address and words her being yearned for. She lived through false hope before.

“Here?” The princess waved at the endless void around them with a skeptical expression. Eldegard knew better than to refuse a chance to delay the horrors and an opportunity to get in striking range with her dagger.

She fully expected not-teacher to snap its fingers and their surroundings to bend till they were standing by the table at Garreg Mach, where they had many times had tea together.

She didn’t expect her professor to pull out a familiar tea carafe from behind his back alongside two cups, before putting down the items on the armchairs of the throne. Her teacher then scooted to one side of the throne and patted the spot beside him on the stone furniture. “Come here.”

“No other furniture around. I haven’t managed to bring a table in here, yet.” Byleth shrugged and started pouring tea. Eldegard stepped up the stairs the throne while fidgeting her dagger, wondering when the twist was going to show up. Her professor, patiently waiting for her with a cup in his hands, looking so very much like he did days ago if not for the green hair. The dream didn’t suddenly shift when Eldegard sat down.

Edelgard fought a sense of surrealism as she found herself sitting side by side with her former professor, so close only their clothing separated the skin of their thighs and shoulders from touching, on the divine seat of Fodlan’s creator god. The experience felt so divorced from Eldgard’s imagination, so fitting for a surprise act from her teacher, that she started to doubt if this was in truth a dream.

Like every time she had taken tea with her professor, she handed over a cup. It was less warm than she expected, a gulp taken after Byleth drank tasted of her favourites but not quite nostalgic. It tasted real rather than the divine imprecision from a nostalgic memory, the tepid warmth arguing yet again against a nightmare following the logic of dreams.

At her side Byleth seemed distracted by the carafe, too big to fit properly on the armchair and apparently divine power didn’t allow the goddess to make it float in midair. Byleth finally put it
down on the void and Eldgard noticed Byleth starring at it with her, maybe wondering too if the carafe was going to fall into some unseen abyss at any moment.

“Where are we?” Eldgard finally asked.

“Outside of time. A realm Sothis made to ease the manipulation of time.” The words were casually spoken like they were something her teacher simply knew. The explanation fit even less with this being a dream, and Eldgard knew that never in a dream she was so aware of the slow passing of time or aware of her surroundings.

“Is this truly you, my teacher?” It was a stupid question but it spilled out of her lips and the answer came just as fast.

“Yes.” The being, or maybe her teacher, answered without hesitation. It made it harder to believe it was a lie.

“But you’re… a vessel for the goddess. It’s what Rhea wanted… didn’t she?” She had pieced that much from her ‘uncle’ insinuations and Rhea’s words in the Holy Tomb.

“Sothis fused with me, yes.” Byleth looked away from her to stare into the black void as he spoke. Not quite like staring in the distance but more like he was looking for someone nearby. “I wish she was still here to talk with me, but we’re one now.”

There was so much that Eldgard wanted to ask by that point.

“Are you here to judge me then? Or stop me?” If this wasn’t a nightmare or dreams it was very possible that the new progenitor god could in fact drag Eldgard to some terrible dimension. The fact that Byleth stared in the dark oblivion for several moments longer didn’t help Eldgard calm down. At last, the man turned his blue-eyed gaze toward her and Eldgard inwardly swore. It was unfair that even now, maybe especially now, his gaze kept making her heart flutter.

“I’m unused to this state of... divinity. It’s so much to remember and see at the same time.” Byleth put a hand on her arm and Eldgard cursed the delightful shiver that coursed through her at the gesture. The hold was gentle rather than the grip she expected, and she realised it was all the more devastating for her heart because kindness was harder to run from than hate. How her ‘uncle’ would be disappointed if he found out how starving her from affection made her susceptible to their most frightening foe. “You always had many questions for me and the goddess. Why don’t you ask them?”

“Still acting as my professor after I attacked your church?” Edelgard tried to ask with humor even as she felt her fingers tremble.

“Of course, my student,” Byleth replied as serenely as he always answered his questions. Eldgard raised her cup to her lips to buy herself some time, feeling a bit sad that this was probably a dream in the end. It was better than a nightmare, but really she shouldn’t be surprised that her mind had conjured this hopelessly romantic fantasy after the series of setbacks she had suffered over the last days.

“Then I’ll seek your guidance, my teacher. Tell me, will I fail in riding the world from crests?” Eldgard decided to play along with the fantasy, hoping it’d let her wake up feeling nice even if she didn’t remember this.

“Yes,” her dreamed professor finally offered. She found herself sighing but not surprised that even in her own mind, her doubts still plagued her beloved’s response. Then he kept talking. “The
reasons are different whether you ask Sothis’ opinion, her knowledge of history, or my current interpretation or your allies. I guess we can keep talking about it, or do you prefer to ask something else?” Eldegard eyed her green haired teacher with renewed suspicion.

“Let’s talk about it,” she finally settled on.

Then the revelations kept coming in, coming and coming in. The alleged dream-version of her professor moved from one topic of another, from facts she kept highly secret to forgotten history and trivia of his mercenary life to form a complex conversation that needed all her mental faculties. Eldegard found herself struggling to keep up with reveal such as the origin of crests and relics: made from the remnant of a slaughtered species of Sothis and Seiros. Or the more personally relevant trivia that while Eldegard had a longer lifespan than Lysithea, the empress might die giving birth which her uncle might know about and purposely not told her. There were so many things, there was so much, that Eldegard couldn’t recall when she knew this was no dream but a place Byleth had dragged her in with new divine powers. No dream could create such complexity, maintain the feeling of cold tone from the throne and warmth from her teacher’s body, or even allow her to remember wet dreams without the surroundings changing in response to her unconscious mind.

Eldegard could feel herself reeling even as she continued to banter with Byleth like she had so often done during their tea parties. She watched the professor and could pick up the wonder in the new god’s words, born from remembering facets and intends of Sothis life a millennia ago alongside with discovering one facts after another that ruined Eldegard’s plans.

It was too much and Eldegard found herself standing up and walking away from the throne before she could stop herself. She heard the abnormally talkative Byleth trails off as she stopped and kept facing away from him.

“I can’t, my teacher. I don’t trust hope that easily. I can’t call off the war. Even if my ‘uncle’ wasn’t in the picture.” Elgard slowly ground out the words before she tentatively turned to see what expression Byleth might be making.

The man nodded and gave her a warm smile, more alien on his face than any eldritch shows of emotions Eldegard had ever seen her former professor display.

“What’s up with that face?” A flustered Eldegard babbled out and she immediately cursed herself teenager nature for the undignified phrasing of her sentence. Byleth’s warm smile turned a bit mischievous.

“Your determination drew me to you when we meet. I never expected a single conversation to sway you.” The words were like wonderful oil on the rusty cogs of her soul and Eldegard knew she needed to run before her love crushed her will.

“Of course, it isn’t enough,” She managed to throw back as she tried to walk away into the black oblivion. An uncharacteristic chuckle reached her ears.

“Till next time, Eldegard.”

The black vanished and Eldegard’s eyes snapped open in what he instantly recognised to be her bedroom for this night. She felt fully awake, fully remembering what had just happened. Her body jerked up in a sitting position and she opened her mouth to call for Hubert, to share what she had just gone through before she started convincing herself that she had truly gone mad.

“H-” The name died on her lips as the final confirmation it hadn’t been a dream lazily rotated
before her. The Crest of Flames lit up the room in its red glow, the symbol of the Progenitor God pulsating a few more times before vanishing back inside her.

“Hubert!”

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