

---

## Prologue

---

### *Years Earlier*

**T**he Princes of Insula, Iver, Zyon and Quinn were all gathered around the great fire, surrounded by their elders in the middle of Bear Claw Village. Their father, King Tybrin was laughing as he mingled with his people on this jovial summer's eve.

The border guards had just changed their shift, and they were celebrating Iver's return from his first mission at The Wall. The Wood Lords were the ruling sons and daughters of Insula, enemies of the far less populated weaker people, the Willow Kye. Both tribes were in a generational war that had begun long before those living now had declared themselves as enemies to the other. It was just passed down orally from elders to young in both tribes that neither group could trust the other. The stories cast Insula and her people in a constant state of chaos.

Folklore said the island was cursed, by a God named Mikos, ruler of the land, sea, and air. He had coupled with Mylala, one of the first human daughters of creation and together they christened the island of Insula as their own.

Upon the birth of their identical demigod twin boys, Malthisious and Myzah, Insula was alive with celebrations. Mikos was so happy he made the entire island bloom into a bountiful utopia where the villagers wanted for nothing and peace was enjoyed.

To give his sons their own sense of identity, Mikos gave Malthisious the magical power to control the creatures below him. He could transform or possess the body of any living thing, except his equally powerful brother.

To Myzah, Mikos gave him power over the weather but cautioned his sons that with greatness comes a greater responsibility. They could not use their powers for evil against one another or the people of Insula. If they did, they would forfeit their magic to the next generation and be deemed unworthy, by their selfish behaviour. While still the son or descendant of a God, they would be as powerless as a mortal human, and forced to watch their own child who *was* worthy in mind and heart, reap the benefits of their genealogy instead.

The mark of the true descendant would be their eyes, the windows to the soul. The true descendant who was beholding of the power would be able to enact their magic through a look. When using their magic, their eyes would crystalize, giving proof they were the chosen one.

If his sons and their descendants lived peacefully, without being corrupted by the powers they inherited, they would live with the powers until their natural death. Then, and only then, the magical gifts would be passed to their worthiest living child, so the rulers of Insula would always have one demigod amongst them. A stark reminder to their people, of their connection to a God and not just being mere mortal. That, Mikos prayed would ensure the islands success, until the end of time.

Unfortunately, as the boys grew it was clear that Malthisious was a kinder soul than his twin. Myzah grew more jealous with each passing year, and eventually tried to poison Malthisious to become the sole ruler of Insula.

Malthisious found out about his brother's plan and had him arrested. However, using magic he escaped, plummeting both men into war. Myzah's people and Malthisious' people were locked in the feud, where they had to choose a side to pledge their loyalty. It was then that Mikos stepped in, furious they had failed to live honourably. Since it was Myzah who had started the trouble, Mikos exiled his ruthless son and his people to an island on the other side of the great sea. He called it Oecam, or 'other world'. It was not as great as Insula, but there he and his descendants could prosper if they worked hard to cultivate the land and work for their success. He punished Malthisious as well, removing the utopia and cursing the people of Insula to not know peace, until the five-hundred-years had passed, and harmony finally came to the tribes of Insula.

When the punishment was over, the true descendants of the twins would meet. A flock of strangers entering their waters would be the first sign to the tribes of Insula that the people of Oecam were coming, and the final show down would be had. The spirits of the brothers would arise in the bodies of those in possession of their gifts once the spell of resurrection was cast from Myzah's descendant's lips.

If Myzah had failed to develop kindness and character, and sought revenge upon the soul and body of Malthisious and his descendant, he would have to try and kill Malthisious once and for all in an equal one on one battle. If he succeeded Insula would sink to the bottom of the sea with all her people and Myzah's descendant would inherit the powers of Malthisious. Oecam would become the new powerful island and rule until the end of time.

However, if Malthisious accepted the challenge from his

brother and his descendant won the battle the curse on Insula would be broken, and the people would resume their utopic existence. Malthisious would inherit Myzah's powers, and Oecam would become an island inhabited only by mortals and unprotected by Mikos.

---

The village was alive with drummers, singing, and story telling. Draco wine was flowing freely, lightening the mood for some who had spent too long patrolling the border camps to ensure the Willow Kye's compliance.

Zyon was playing a game of chase with Quinn, when Tybrin called them over. Both boys immediately obeyed their father and went to sit by him and Iver. Lutta had returned Iver to Bear Claw and was sitting quietly carving a pipe to smoke the weed he had in his satchel.

Zyon and Quinn loved when Lutta was in the village. He told the greatest stories, and you could swear he had witnessed them himself. Many were just nonsense he created for entertainment, but the one about the curse, he swore, was different and all three of the Princes begged him to repeat it over and over whenever nights like this had them all around, under the stars. Iver, now considered a young man, had stopped asking for the tale. The magic it had seemed in his boyhood was replaced by doubt that the tale held any truth at all.

Lutta knew it was important for the boys to learn the story, so he happily obliged after making it seem like he did not wish to retell the story about Mikos' Curse. However, Lutta was confident this generation would be the one when all would learn that there is a little truth in the stories passed down from your elders, and as he loved to tell them, *nothing is ever as it seems*.

Sure enough, little Quinn was the one to bring it up. "Lutta tell us the story of the curse," he begged, his two front teeth miss-

ing. Lutta pretended not to hear the boy, so Zyon added his voice to the choir in the hope the seer would delight them with his flamboyant acting skills and talented way with words. “Yeah, Lutta. You haven’t told us in ages, please retell us about Mikos, Malthisious and Myzah,” he begged.

Lutta locked eyes with Tybrin and Iver who both nodded and smiled.

Teasing them, Lutta said, “Nah, you don’t want to hear that old tale again. Why don’t I explain the cluster of stars over there, it is much more interesting?”

“No,” Zy and Quinn whined in unison. “We want to hear about the curse!” And then began to chant, “Curse, curse, curse...” Tybrin was becoming agitated by their incessant use of the word, and said, “Lutta, for the love of the Gods, man, just tell it to quiet these little hoodlums, or I’ll leave them to curse you while you are home from The Wall.”

Various renditions of the story had been passed down over the years. Their oral culture had lost some of the details carved in The Wall, but not many descendants of Malthisious took them as more than a fairy tale. Odd things had happened on Insula, but most Kings dispelled the idea of the curse. Witchcraft was not something their people were familiar with, so they preferred to use logic or fate to explain bad situations.

Lutta however, embellished the tale, so with Tybrin’s threat, he withdrew some powder that when blown into a fire made it ignite further into the air like magic. It was his signature trick for gaining the attention of people, who came crowding to hear the story from his lips. Zy and Quinn squealed with delight and Iver listened but didn’t believe in the magic like his younger siblings, anymore. To him it seemed like hogwash some elders high on smoke, carved to make the Wood Lord people fear strangers to their coast. He was the son of a King, and he didn’t inherit any unworldly powers. If he had, he’d certainly not be mucking his own horse stalls.

As Lutta held the others captivated with his descriptive adjectives and occasional actions, Iver just half-listened, not really believing it would ever truly be something he'd need to know. There was no way the Wood Lords and Willow Kye would ever settle their feud and live in peace. Not after the kidnapping and murder of Princess Gemma so many generations ago. He was fully confident that he would be King, and his son after, and so on and so forth. Life would carry on much as it had on Insula until the Gods decided time should end.

Tybrin often warned Iver, that although he was also doubtful about the truth of the curse as well, he wanted to warn his sons in case any truth came to light. If the legend were true, Tybrin estimated that it would be Iver or Iver's son in power when the five-hundred-year anniversary occurred. It was why they executed many strange explorers who dared to come ashore.

The curse warned that the children of Insula would accept some of Myzah's people into their fold, false friends who would make one of their own betray them. The war would come on the five-hundredth anniversary once peace had been fastened by blood between the Willow Kye and the Wood Lords. Harmony would exist and the tribe of Oecam would make the pilgrimage to attempt to break the curse cast on them as well.

A permanent darkness would set in, bringing heavy snow and dangerous storms. The sign that the long-held feud was building to its climax. The true descendants would need to summon the souls of the demigod twins, punished by Mikos, and then allow the final battle to occur. Power was a very vicious beast, and the greed of it was a stain upon the souls of men. Mikos hoped over time the children of his sons would develop a character stronger than their forefathers, and use their power for the betterment of all. A lot of the story took on different versions of just how the curse could be broken, but Iver and Insula were told that the True Descendant of Malthisious would need to kill Myzah's True Descendant in order to rise victorious.