

## A Love Beyond the Stars

It was a night like no other on the world of Sarnaut. The wind howled across the floating islands, carrying with it the sharp scent of the sea and the faint, magical hum of the Allods in the distance. In the great city of Novograd, I stood atop a balcony overlooking the spires and bustling streets below. I was no hero, no great warrior of legend. I was just a humble Arisen, one of the undead, standing with my heart in a state of turmoil.

My name is Aurelius, and I'd spent countless hours exploring the war-torn realms of Sarnaut, fighting monsters and gaining power in the battle between the League and the Empire. But it was not the battles that I had come to love. It was her.

Her name was Lithania, an enigmatic Elven mage who had joined my guild, Constelations, several months ago. She was swift with her spells, her flame dances bright against the darkness of the surrounding enemies. But it wasn't her fire that I fell for. No, it was the quiet moments between the fights, the way she always made sure no one was left behind. Her soft words of encouragement when I was about to give up. The gentle way she healed my wounds after every battle.

We'd spent countless hours together in Sarn's Orbit, farming for materials to upgrade our gear, and exploring the deep caverns of the Astral Dungeons. Together, we fought off the terrifying Kanians, and together, we secured many victories in the Name of the League. Yet, in all that time, I never said the words that weighed on my heart: "I love you."

It was in the midst of our latest journey that I realized it was time to speak those words. We were traveling to the Astral Allods, gathering the ancient relics that had the power to control the Astral energy. We had arrived at Saren's Straits, a dangerous, narrow passage guarded by vile Astral Beasts. I had my doubts we would make it through, but Lithania stood beside me, a calm presence in the chaos.

"Aurelius, are you ready?" Lithania's voice was soft, melodic, like a gentle breeze. Her long silver hair swayed with the wind as she adjusted her robes.

“Ready,” I replied, though my heart was far from calm. I wasn’t sure what had changed in me, but every moment spent near her felt like a cosmic alignment, one that I was desperately trying to understand.

We dove into the darkness of the straits, fending off creatures, dodging falling debris, and exploring deeper into the dangerous heart of the Allod. But with each passing moment, my resolve grew stronger. I couldn’t keep my feelings hidden anymore.

When we finally arrived at the shard of light, an ancient relic rumored to hold immense power, Lithania knelt beside the shimmering stone, brushing her fingers along its surface. She whispered a few words in an ancient tongue, and the stone began to glow brighter, as if responding to her touch.

I took a deep breath. Now or never.

"Lithania," I said, my voice a little more strained than I intended. "There's something I need to tell you."

She paused, looking up from the relic. Her eyes were a soft shade of violet, full of curiosity. "What is it, Aurelius?"

I took a step closer, my hands shaking. "I... I don't know how to say this. But I can't hide it any longer. All this time, through every battle, every raid, every moment we've shared... I've fallen for you."

Lithania blinked, a surprised expression crossing her face. "Fallen for me? But I thought... I thought you never looked at me like that."

I swallowed hard. "I didn't want to confuse things. We're part of the same guild, fighting for the League, and there was a lot on the line. But now, with everything we've been through... I realize I can't keep pretending that you're just my friend. I care for you, more than I can explain."

For a moment, there was silence. Only the distant echo of battle from the far reaches of the Allods interrupted the stillness. The world seemed to pause around us, as if waiting for her answer.

Then, to my surprise, she smiled. Her lips curled into a warm expression that made my heart skip a beat. “Aurelius, you fool,” she said softly, standing up from the relic and walking over to me.

I braced myself for rejection, but instead, she reached out and placed a hand on my chest, where my heart — or what remained of it — beat in time with my racing thoughts. “I’ve known for a while, you know. I’ve seen the way you protect everyone in our guild. How you always make sure I’m safe, even when it puts you at risk. I didn’t think you’d feel the same way, though.”

I could hardly believe my ears. Was she saying...?

Her fingers slid gently under my chin, tilting my head up so that I looked into her eyes. “I care about you, too. I’ve been waiting for you to say it, Soren. But I suppose you needed to find the courage first.”

My heart soared. It was as if the entire world shifted, everything falling into place. The Astral energies surged around us, reacting to our unspoken connection, but none of that mattered now. There was only Lithania.

“I love you,” I said again, this time without hesitation, the words flowing easily from my lips.

She smiled, her face glowing as brightly as the Shard of Light. “I love you too, Aurelius.”

And in that moment, standing in the heart of the Astral, surrounded by the wonders and dangers of Sarnaut, I realized that love wasn’t bound by the realm we inhabited. It wasn’t confined to the battles we fought or the victories we claimed. It was something far greater.

As we stood there, hands entwined, our guildmates' voices echoed in the distance, calling for us to return to the fight. But for once, I wasn't thinking about the next battle. I was thinking about the one I had just won—the one for her heart.

And so, with Lithuania by my side, I knew that no matter what the Astral realms threw at us next, we would face it together.