

Interlude - Reunited

Selia sighed as she sunk into the chair, exhausted after another day of meetings. There was too much to do, and too little time to do it. She had spent weeks now in talks with the most influential members of the Twilight Melody Sect and the factions that were going to join it, hers included. The rough draft was done, and the three families within the new Twilight Melody Sect have been decided. Now they had to deal with everything else. The Sect had too many different Paths and different subsects as part of it. As often happened with Frontier Sects where people who had no prospects came together and joined into a single sect to survive.

Anrosh's and the rest of their small council, had decided to allow everyone to choose which of the main families they wanted to join, regardless of Paths—or focuses. As long as their focus aligned with the core direction of the family. The rest would need to make their own families, which wouldn't enjoy all the benefits of high rarity paths, of course. Although not even those who joined would, only their descendants, or those who still had room to grow and could take another Path.

The three families, as decided, would be Dagda, Woll, and Ekoa. It was a standard way of unifying a sect made out of many different families, even Zenshuen started that way. For now, all that joined a family would add a new name to their current ones. Over time the sect would be forged into a more cohesive unit.

Still, there were... things that were unlike those that she had come to be accustomed to. She had expected it, Ryun wasn't at all a traditional Sect Head, and it seemed that Anrosh was following in his footsteps. Each of the three families would have an overall focus, or at least a primary purpose. That wasn't anything new, families specialized, the way in which Anrosh imagined it though... Usually, families would try to follow the same Paths, or at least those that are related. The three families of the Twilight Melody Sect would only be required to follow the general focus of the family.

It was... a lot to take for someone like her, who had been part of the more traditional Sect. Though, she had been part of the discussions, of the decisions, all parties had compromised.

The Ornn family was taking on the name of Dagda—an old name for a god from the old Earths—it was chosen by Karya Ornn. Their family would be led by Ender Ornn who would be given the role of a Sect Leader. Ornn Dagda Family was going to be focused on agriculture, on growth and production of food as well as special plants. Sect Leader Embesh was likely to join the family, as Anrosh wanted the primarily Classer faction to learn more about Cultivation.

The Woll would be the central family of the Sect, led by Anrosh herself. A faction focused on territorial defense and management, crafting and building. It was a bit wide as far as focus duties went, but Twilight Melody Sect wasn't ordinary. The name came from Anrosh, it had some significance to her, but Selia didn't know it. The Woll Family was going to keep Ryun's Paths as the primary focuses for their defenders.

The last Family was going to be made with the Zenshuen remnants at the core. Ekoa, named after the ekoa tree that was brought from the Demasi homeworld—Enhell. A name that Selia had chosen for her Grandfather's love of it, and the stories he used to tell her beneath its tall branches when she was young. Ekoa would focus on the more martial Paths, accepting all warriors, hunters, or adventurers. Their main job as a family would be to hunt high tiered wandering monsters, to explore beyond the Sect's borders and help claim new territories.

Of course, every faction would still have warriors or crafters and everything else that they wanted or needed to support their main jobs, but a primary push for a focus was established. This was just the beginning, it would take years, decades even, for them to truly grow into what they were imagining the Sect to become.

They hadn't made any agreement regarding which Family Ryun would join, in fact, current sentiment was that he shouldn't join any. To remain as neutral a leader as possible. In practice, it didn't matter, she doubted that Ryun would care for politics. Still, they had the agreements made, and would soon be putting them into practice. Selia had been asked

to lead the Ekoa Family, to become a Sect Leader again. It was... after what happened with Zenshuen she had resisted leading, in part because she didn't want to have responsibility for an entire Sect. This was... what they were asking of her was closer to what she had been for Zenshuen while her Grandfather was alive. It was a familiar role, where she wouldn't need to be making any decisions that would have really big consequences.

"You look exhausted," Erdania said as she entered the room and found her sitting in the chair.

"I am exhausted," She said. Their last meeting had lasted for several hours. And she had to spend it all trying not to think about the sensation in her head.

"How did it go," Erdania asked.

"As good as it could've, we are mostly agreed on everything. Only a few minor things left to work out," Selia answered. "Also, Ryun is back."

"He attended the meeting?" Erdania asked, somewhat surprised.

"No," Selia answered. "He skulked around, waiting for it to end. He is in the palace now, probably meeting with Anrosh."

Erdania chuckled. "I admire the shirking of responsibility."

"His trust in Anrosh is absolute, not that I disagree. She is young, but she proved herself. And you saw what effect Ryun had on everyone, back then when..." She shook her head. "Whether he intends it or not, the mysterious Sect Head role suits him and this sect."

"True," Erdania added.

Selia opened her mouth, then stopped, and tilted her head.

"What is it?" Erdania asked, noticing her distraction.

"He is coming here," she told her as she stood up and walked out on the balcony.

A shrouded form leapt through the air, stepping on... nothing. Selia frowned, she didn't detect any Qi in the air around him, nor did she see his usual Void cubes. As he drew nearer and slowed, she saw something strange. Every time his leg hit something invisible in the air and used it as a step, a ripple would go through his pants, something that stopped them from billowing in the wind for just a split second.

He stepped on the balcony and tilted his head.

“You noticed something,” he just said.

Selia met his eyes, and then said what she had seen.

“Ah. I Didn’t think about that,” he looked down at his pants. “It robs my legs and everything touching them of momentum. Hm...”

“You might want to explain what you mean by that,” Erdania said from behind her.

Ryun raised his head, then removed his cloak which obscured his features. Selia blinked as she saw that he had changed. The cracks in his skin were more pronounced, and silver had joined violet and black.

“Yes, I think that I should explain. Let’s go inside.”

Selia followed him inside her rooms, eager to hear what he had to say.

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Oblivion, she hadn’t actually ever met anyone who had that Aspect. She heard of it, though she didn’t remember where or in what context. From what Ryun told them, it was very powerful. Again, she felt a pang of jealousy, he had advanced and he had grown in power again, while she still remained in the Evolved Realm. Erdania had advanced too, after Selia finally managed to convince her that she shouldn’t wait for her. Both of them had spoken to her about the inspiration for the next Realm, tried to help. She just... couldn’t. She still had the elixir that Ryun had gifted her, the one that he said would help her gain inspiration if not outright let her skip it. She kept it in her ring, trying not to think about it. In part because she wanted to reach the Ascended Realm on her own, because she didn’t want to feel inadequate.

“I also have this,” Ryun offered them a small orb-like item.

Erdania took it first and frowned, then offered it to Selia.

Shrine of Worldstone	Place a shrine source of tier 9 Worldstone Essence
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“Worldstone?” Selia asked. “I’ve never heard of that Essence.”

“It was the Essence of the monster Tali and I fought,” he answered. “It was... very powerful. The most powerful monster I ever fought. Aside maybe Hastur, but even that, I could damage Hastur, I couldn’t do anything to this monster until I merged my Aspects.”

Selia frowned.

“I was thinking about placing it somewhere in this territory,” Ryun said. “Near Consequence. I think that it might go well with Anrosh’s Absolute Cold and the Path of the Unbreakable Wall.”

“A high tiered Essence source is a treasure either way,” Erdania said.

Selia nodded, agreeing.

“Yes,” Ryun said. “I’ve also been wondering if perhaps you would be interested in taking this Aspect as your second.”

Selia blinked. “We already have Paths that we rare following.”

“Paths and builds that are not your own,” Ryun said. “I know that you both plan on picking the Kinetic Aspect as your second. I’ll understand if you don’t want it, but... Selia, this Aspect is highly compatible with willpower, it is highly resistant, strong, powerful. It might be a better pick for you.”

Selia glanced to the side, and saw Erdania with a thoughtful expression on her face.

“You’re not really thinking about it?” She asked.

“I... yes, I think that I am,” Erdania said.

Selia opened her mouth, and then stopped herself. She gave it a real thought. Her build was the one that her Sect had honed over a long period of years. Adding the Kinetic Aspect to her own would give her constructs extra power. This... she didn’t know what this would do for her. She only had Ryun’s description of the monster’s power. Which, was impressive, but it wasn’t anything tested.

“Well,” Ryun started. “I’m not going to press you on it, you make your own decisions. I came here for another reason actually.”

Selia tilted her head.

“I’ve been invited to a gathering, in the Dragon Heart Sect,” Ryun said, and before she could even progress his words he continued. “I wanted

to see if perhaps, you, Erdania, would like to come with me as my second. Tali is coming too, and she is bringing Lesamitrius as hers.”

Selia blinked, then turned to Erdania who was surprised by the question.

“I was just thinking that this is a good opportunity for the two of us to spend a bit more time together,” Ryun continued. “Selia and I can talk whenever we want, and she will be busy with the Sect issues for the foreseeable future. I wouldn’t want you to get bored, sitting in the Sect and not doing anything.”

“You should go,” Selia said.

Erdania met her eyes. “Are you sure?”

“Yes,” Selia said. “I can always talk with Ryun, and you two should spend some time together.”

She had spent so much of her life with Erdania, but now that she had advanced... A part of her wanted to be on her own for a bit. To try and find the spark to her Cultivation again. Somehow, she felt that as long as both of them were near, she would only compare herself to their achievements.

“If you are sure,” Erdania said.

“Don’t worry,” Ryun said. “We won’t be gone long.”

Selia felt a weight she didn’t know was hindering her, lift. She had never been alone for a long period of time, perhaps that was what she had been missing. She would take this opportunity and see if she could discover herself anew. To see if she was worthy of Advancing on her own.