

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Eight

Unfortunately, even as I arrived at the door of my home, the challenge was yet to be over. On the contrary, it was just starting.

Luckily, once I managed to draw close, the presence of the main material plane was intense enough that I didn't need to be afraid of getting lost again, so I let the connection with the ship — one of many that I could sense, using some kind of magical dock that was far bigger than the other planes — fade away, and let myself float freely at the dimension.

That removed the risk of immediately getting caught by the Eternals, but still left two problems.

First, the intense strength of the planar border, which was far stronger than any fragmented planes I had come across. I could possibly manage against it, but it wouldn't be a simple challenge. But that wasn't the most significant challenge.

No, that honor went to the elemental beings floating around the plane, fighting to penetrate through the dimensional barrier, with a density that shocked me. Even with the detection in Primordial Aether being hampered, I was still able to push forward recklessly.

That was not a confrontation I wanted to have ... because, unlike the other beings, elementals looked rather at ease with the Primordial Aether, not sharing the fragility of the other being. An interesting aspect of their behavior.

I circled the plane, looking for an opportunity. I could have tried to dodge the elementals, which seemed sustainable since they didn't notice my presence, but I didn't dare to just push through the planar border. I still remembered just how easy was for me to be detected in that light plane, and I didn't want to risk something more.

The opportunity I was seeking, I found a day later. Several elementals, rushed through yet another breach, allowing me to slip through the breached border.

And, the moment I slipped through the border, I felt a connection between me and the System. Admittedly, it felt like it came from a seed, one that was long buried in me.

It was the system, trying to make a connection ... yet, I could sense that it was the ordinary System and not my unique one.

"A bit late, buddy," I thought mockingly even as I suppressed that connection, having absolutely no idea to connect with it. Even now, it was a complicated connection for me ... but luckily, after

everything, I had the ability to block it easily.

Yet, I let that seed alive, because there was a chance the System could still detect me without that seed. I remembered my cute dragon only being safe under the darkness ward.

The magical yet hopeless struggle of the elementals around us gave me a good idea about potential risks. Of course, there was a chance that it wouldn't be the case ... but then there was a chance that there would be.

I left the elementals to their desperate struggle and teleported away.

After one jump, I paused, and started meditating, trying to detect the location of my girls ... only to have another failure. I could feel their presence, and the fact that they were alive, but that was the extent of my ability. I was not able to detect anything else.

A troubling detail.

"It seems that the disconnect with the System will impair me more than I feared," I murmured. "Luckily, I still have my beacons."

Unfortunately, that was not entirely without a challenge either. The main material plane was huge, far bigger than I had even given credit. Even when I was completely on the plane, I wasn't able to sense my beacons properly. They were a distant lump at a faraway distance.

I slipped into the Aether plane, which, after the horrible challenge of Primordial Aether, felt like a holiday. It was even smoother than the Aether of the fragmented planes, though with absolutely no hint of mana, unlike the others.

The slow yet efficient suction of the System was rather obvious. I continued to travel, ignoring the temptation of stopping for some sightseeing. Even with my near-infinite mana — as I was still able to easily break down Aether — I didn't want to take any risk.

Yet, soon, I became glad for that decision for another reason. The closer I got, the more distinct the presence of my beacons started to get. Yet, as I drew closer, I noticed the absence of some particular beacons.

Which I had left at Silver Spires.

I felt tense. Admittedly, the only reason I wasn't panicking was that I could feel the existence of my girls in my soul, preventing me from coming to some unfortunate conclusions about their

state of living.

After a long travel, I finally managed to find Silver Spires ... or, at least, what was left of them.

The first thing I noticed was the ragged nature of the area. The towers, famous for their unique color, had been damaged. Half of them were destroyed — which included the tower of the headmistress — and the rest had suffered some significant damage, enough to turn them into ruins.

Just in case, I decided to walk the rest of the distance rather than risking teleportation, even to one of the safe houses I created, and instead decided to walk the rest of the distance, a little magical field around me enough to hide me from the monsters that surrounded me.

As I got closer, I could see more details. Unlike the towers, the walls were mostly intact, and manned by a surprising number of guards, defending the school against the monsters.

However, that didn't fill me with confidence, not when I got close enough to notice their uniforms, which were not the distinct style of the guards of the Silver Spire.

They were wearing the colors of the royal family.

“What the hell had happened there?” I murmured as I approached, feeling tense. I had been confident that the girls would have been enough to handle the mess that they were facing, and seeing the evidence otherwise was not good news.

Still, turning and leaving was not one of the considerations. Even if the girls were not there anymore, the location offered me the best opportunity to find a clue about what had happened. Before I arrived, I found a caravan moving toward the broken school, and slipped inside, casting an illusion to blend.

It was temporary, of course, as I couldn't be sure if there was someone competent in illusions at the walls. Not to mention, with the constant draining effect of the System, it was far harder to establish a convincing illusion, and I didn't want to take the risk.

So, I stole a bunch of clothes even as I listened to the gossip, trying to understand what had happened.

What I learned was useful. Apparently, there had been a war at Silver Spires two months ago, with the Royal family sieging the place to punish them for hosting the Princess. I had no doubt that it was a bullshit excuse, as I doubted the princes could mobilize enough to take the place

down while it was defended by my girls.

I had no doubt that the Eternals played a big role.

Yet, I didn't despair, because it was not the extent of the gossip. No, instead, they were still gossiping about how lucky they would have been to somehow catch one of the several women who were being searched.

A list that included all of my girls without exception ... though how they learned the name of my sexy dragon was a mystery. Things probably had gone worse than I expected. Still, the fact that the search was active was enough to give me even more hope about their relative comfort. They were still on the run, at least.

Of course, that left me with a difficult mission to search and discover the truth of the issue, a monumental task ... thankfully, not impossible.

I didn't have much trouble sneaking into the school, once again using one of the secret passages rather than using the main entrance, and my knowledge of the walls was useful. And, just like that, I was back in Silver Spires, where everything started.

Ready to find my targets.

Rather than acting immediately, however, I started to observe my surroundings.

The search wouldn't start easy, not when I was surrounded by an army of unfamiliar faces. Worse, from the way people were moving, I could see that they were stronger than I expected ... with their stats far higher than the old state.

If they were wearing fancy clothes, I would have expected them to be a part of the royal family. But, no, they were clearly taking weaker positions. Which meant their origin was dubious. The Eternals were my best guess...

The search wouldn't be easy indeed...

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{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 45

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 32920}

{Pseudo-HP: 1103 Mana: 2410}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess}

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Nine

I couldn't help but feel nostalgic as I walked through. Even with all the changes, it was just like the past. Once again, I was disguised as a servant, walking around, desperate to hide my true identity.

The only difference was the nature of the threat. In the past, I was afraid that anyone could take me down ... but now, it was different. I just needed to avoid the attention of the Eternals.

As I walked around, I took note of the changes. Amusingly, more than half of the teachers stayed, showing that they had no problems with the new management. Even more interestingly, the guilds were also here ... and they were acting far more arrogantly.

Enough to actually insult the teachers.

A rather interesting change.

However, the classes also changed, paying even lesser attention to the content of the classes, making Silver Spires even more useless ... and even the levels of the students were much lower.

"I wonder why they didn't just close it down," I murmured. Maybe it was a trap ... not for me, obviously, as they had no idea about my survival, but the girls. Considering they were wanted, it made sense.

Unfortunately, poking around the locations that could be accessed by servants didn't give me any clue about their destination. I needed to be more adventurous.

First, I visited the ruins of the headmistress' tower, trying to find any hint of a ward, a hidden clue, maybe a Divine Spark ... but nothing stayed other than a bunch of rock. Whatever destroyed it did so with a rather intense display of anger, and if anything survived, I wasn't able to pick through my magical probes — limited to avoid distracting the wards that surrounded the area.

Naturally, there was no hint of Divine Spark, which was not a shocking surprise. Without the darkness ward to protect it, the System would have long devoured it.

I needed to cast more aggressive detection wards ... but I was having trouble doing so, afraid of getting caught. Especially since my mana signature was slightly different than the one that the System provided.

I didn't know if they had the ability to catch, but either way, I didn't want to go around throwing epic spells.

Maybe I could tap into a different source instead, I decided.

Then, as I passed near a warding class, where an incompetent teacher teaching an even more incompetent batch of students, I had an idea. Do I need to be the one to cast the spell?

Sneaking into the class while staying hidden under a shadow was trivial with my stats, and a blanket of illusion ensured it would stay that way.

I didn't have to wait long for an opportunity. The incompetent teacher was building an unnecessarily complicated ward that would waste a lot of mana, so I stretched a tendril of mine, connecting to his soul space to pilfer a good amount of mana in the process.

Watching the ward stutter and die was a particular kind of fun.

Though, I didn't pull back ... because I had realized he also had a water magic skill. Just an advanced one, but I wondered if I could use it for my benefit. I pushed some of the mana I acquired from him ... and from the other side, I received some freshly converted elemental mana.

Just what I needed, I thought with a huge smirk, and decided to extend that trick to the rest of the class; their attempted wards failing just as easily.

Not that I cared, but when I discovered another student having earth magic ... so, I channeled the mana I stole through his skill as well.

{+1200 Mana}

Not a bad haul, especially since it was split between three sources, pure, water, and earth.

If I used it carefully, it should be enough to cast a decent detection ward.

However, as I played along in their soul space, I noticed something interesting. As they worked on their magic determinedly, I sensed the momentary appearance of Divine Spark. It was a subtle effect, barely more than a fraction of a point.

It reminded me worship of the elves and the resulting Divine Spark.

Of course, the existence of an occasional divine spark was not a shock. I had long deduced the

reason the Eternals did their best to dominate the main material plane was the renewable Divine Spark generation. I guessed the reason they let the beasts survive was the same reason.

They wanted the people to live under constant pressure, and what better way to ensure that than a hostile environment, where the constant presence of numbers reminded them they just needed to fight a bit more to secure their freedom from the dangers.

A beautiful balance, I had to admit.

Yet, it wasn't what caught my attention. No, most of the Divine Spark had been just devoured by the System ... but a few drifted downward.

And disappeared.

Not devoured by the system.

"How interesting," I thought even as I extended my mana slightly, trying to touch what was going on. I managed to catch a glimpse, but it took quite a while. Still, I managed to capture a hint of Darkness Mana, concealing the spark before it could disappear.

"Wow,, that's a challenge," I murmured, but rather than rushing forward, I stayed put, not wanting to scare away my only potential clue. Instead,, I stayed back, carefully tracking the direction of the darkness ward to extrapolate a direction.

It didn't work, the directions were wild enough that, either the target location was on the move — wildly so — or the spell accounted for that fact.

Luckily, I had other options.

First, I stole some of the Divine Sparks that were being stolen ... and managed to inject pure mana in the depths of it, and injected my own Divine Spark into it. The ward protected it from being stolen, and my connection ensured that I could track it toward its destination.

It had traveled through a confusing path at first, but soon, it was revealed that the path had been the first layer of protective measures, and it steadily started to go underground.

"Finally, a destination," I murmured as I finally left the classroom and followed the path. First, I arrived at the storage rooms in the basements. With my stats, finding a weak spot in the damaged wards only took a second ... and I started using Earth Mana to create a tunnel once more.

“Fucking finally,” I murmured as I enjoyed the smooth journey. It had been a long while since I didn’t have to use rough arcane mana to replicate the task, and the difference in performance was incredible.

Still, I did my best to limit the mana presence while closing the tunnel behind me, afraid of getting caught — by Eternals, and by the owner of the Darkness ward.

I had to travel far deeper than I expected. Only after I was two miles underground, I came across a protective ward, one that had been created by Darkness mana, making it very troubling to sneak in.

Troubling, but not impossible. I stayed at the edge for another hour, stealing slivers of Darkness mana from the wards, aware that it would be the only way to conceal myself from the other tools of detection. Darkness mana was excellent for it.

And, the irony of using their own weapon for this purpose was very interesting.

Soon, I gathered enough mana to create a beautiful cloak around me, and used it to slip through the initial darkness ward. For all its amazing qualities of maintaining concealment, Darkness mana wasn’t a good material to make wards. Once discovered, bypassing them was trivial.

Oh, whoever built it was smart enough to realize that fact and built a secondary layer under the first, but whoever built it wasn’t exactly competent. High-leveled, but not competent.

“Probably the princess,” I murmured as I assessed the evidence. That made sense, as she had access to the darkness ward, and if necessary, high-level skills, and the combination would allow her to dig down.

But, I could also deduce that it was not for her own residence. They had already bonded with Darkness Spark, and unless things had changed radically, she wouldn’t be able to use the Sparks she had been stealing from the school.

With that in mind, I continued traveling down, bypassing the ward layers, taking note of the details.

Then, I arrived at the center of the wards, and I came across a familiar sight. Two familiar sights, even.

The first, and the less important, part was the crystal platform that the headmistress was using

to suppress her divine spark continuously. However, not without some changes, as half of the supporting pillars were gone while the platform itself showed signs of damage as well.

All of those were just details compared to the more important aspect.

Helga was at the center of the platform, naked and frozen...

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{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 45

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 32920}

{Pseudo-HP: 1103 Mana: 2410}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety

As much as I wanted to rush forward to make sure Helga was alright, I kept myself back.

After months of staying away, I didn't want to ruin everything by a solitary mistake. Instead, I stayed at the edge, expanding my mana with a focus I had rarely gathered, using the softest touches I could manage to check every single spell around her, painstakingly making sure that there was no trap ready to go off.

Then, I turned my attention to the spells that were keeping her in stasis. At first, I thought that she was a prisoner, but a detailed diagnosis showed that none of the spells actually kept her unconscious, just supported her life functions, and kept her alive.

At the same time, it drained some mana from Helga to maintain the wards, channeling some through a Darkness Spark — leftover from the large ward the headmistress employed — to make sure both wards stood strong.

The caster of those spells was the same, likely the princess through one of her clones once again. The caster's intent was good ... but misguided, I realized, as while I was working on the wards, I watched the darkness ward slowly adding Divine Sparks to Helga.

That didn't surprise me as much as it should have. After all, even before it finally deserted me, writing me off for dead or lost, I knew that my System was doing its best to use me as some kind of vector to gather more Divine Spark, and it wasn't too shocking that it focused on my Companions once that was not an option.

Maybe it was what the princess was thinking. Helga would continue to absorb Divine Spark and channel it to the mysterious real owner, and it would help Helga in turn.

Unfortunately, from the shoddy construction of the wards, it was clear that she didn't have much time to build the hideout ... and that meant she also didn't think about how the darkness ward would interact with the situation.

I was almost sure that, at first, darkness ward didn't stop the spark from being drained. Unfortunately, that was a temporary situation. As the wards got stronger due to their connection with Helga, the darkness ward got strong enough to cut the connection completely. I was sure that those wards weren't built by the same person who built the genius collection aspect.

Which prevented the System from draining the Spark from Helga. A troubling situation.

But just troubling, and not desperate. After all, as far as I could understand, I was the closest thing to an expert on divinity, with the perfect toolkit to solve the issues.

I was tempted to cure her ... but I decided against it. "No hurry," I murmured. I needed to do this right, not quick. After some consideration, decided to focus on the wards at first. I cut Helga's connection with the outer wards and took it for myself, feeling a remote connection with the Darkness Spark.

It was truly a pitiful fragment, barely half a point, but still, it was enough to convert the pure mana of the System with decent efficiency. And, it was even better with my overly purified mana, especially after I focused on making it as malleable as possible. Unlike the System-provided mana, I didn't care to make it usable without transformation.

Still, I spent two hours carefully feeding the ward while also working on its structure. It was the first time I was working on such a complex darkness ward on my own, but I had some impressions from the past. More importantly, forty-five points of intelligence were no joke, and they allowed me to solve the complicated problems inherent in the structure with shocking efficiency.

And, two hours later, the area turned into an impenetrable area that the System couldn't hope to penetrate, a small safe house that I could focus on immediately.

Only then, I allowed myself to walk toward Helga, and dispelled all the spells that were holding her in place before looking inward to her soul space.

It was a chaotic mess. Her original, System-granted soulspace was damaged beyond repair, and while I could see the hints of a new one trying to grow out of her companion node, it was nowhere near successful, damaged by the free-flowing Divine Spark fragments.

Fragments that were far more crowded than I expected ... hundreds of points worth in my measures. And, the only reason that didn't kill Helga already was the partial bond she managed to achieve with some of the Divine Spark ... a shocking achievement.

Even as I slowly purified those connections, I tried to understand the nature of the Divine Spark that had been collected by her ... it was a different shape than the others, with a certain purity that was very similar to pure mana.

It was hard to identify the Spark, but the taste of it gave me a similar feeling to how Helga

thought. A desperate search for knowledge ... the search for truth. And, unlike the other sparks I played with, it lacked the aspect of domination.

For convenience, I decided on a name.

Knowledge Spark.

With that decision, I started the slow, methodical process of capturing every single fragmented spark, purifying the excess, useless components. As, not every fragment carried her search for truth and knowledge as purely.

With those cleansed, the amount she had finally dropped below a hundred, the remainder taken by me.

{+349 Purified. Spark}

Not because of my greed, but because I wanted her to have something closest to the concept she managed to extract. The ward she had built to collect them had been very selective, and I didn't want to ruin her plans by meddling too much.

Instead, I carefully modulated the absorption of the Divine Spark, while at the same time, I cleansed every little bit of the System and Companion process from her body, locking them behind a fake soulspace that would still give the impression that Helga was unconscious.

In case the wards fail they could detect her once again.

I didn't need them polluting the complicated process of her first proper Divine step.

Another hour, and her eyes fluttered open. A fascinating sight, especially since I could see her eyes glowing with an intensity that I missed. "T-tell me it's not a dream," she whispered, her voice throaty.

I would have told her that, but it soon turned impossible. My lips were silenced by hers as she slammed her lips against mine with a desperation that shocked me, her hands gripping my hair as hard as she could manage without her stats.

I barely registered the pragmatic differences in her body as her legs wrapped around my waist, and she desperately grabbed me, doing her best to increase contact between us.

Who was I to disappoint my favorite nerd, I decided as I cast a simple spell, making my clothes melt off my body, leaving her alone and ready for more.

She clearly missed me as much as I missed her, as she moved her hips higher without the slightest hint of resistance, her thick thighs tightening around my waist, her core dragging around my length, getting wetter by each second.

She trembled desperately as she did so, not just excitement but also exhaustion, showing her haphazard recovery system hadn't been very effective.

With a kiss, I flooded her body with pseudo-HP even as I let my hands drift down through her sides until they landed on her delicious thighs, supporting her up. "Better?" I asked.

She nodded enthusiastically, not trusting herself to talk, immediately returning to the kiss.

I just chuckled as my fingers tightened on her ass while I slowly lowered her down, ignoring my usual habit of teasing. Her excitement, once clear as a day, was too beautiful to darken with frustration after such a long departure.

She wanted to remind herself that I returned. "Faster," she moaned as she pushed her trembling legs down, taking me deeper inside. She let out a guttural moan, and I found myself being pushed on the floor, Helga firmly sitting on my shaft. "I missed you so much, you bastard," she exclaimed even as she moved back and forth, enjoying a panicked, hasty ride.

"I missed you too, my love," I answered, her smile growing incredibly. She smiled brightly even as she danced back and forth above my shaft, her eyes firmly open as if she wanted to make sure I couldn't disappear from under her.

That alone was enough to confirm just how hard had been my disappearance.

I stayed under her, letting her ride me, completely on her terms, no matter how much her beautiful moans tempted me to take control. She deserved her reward certainly. I tightened my hands on her cheeks, enjoying their generous softness.

"Faster," she moaned as she picked up speed, her eyes filled with a deep need, a burning passion.

Her desperate ride, combined with the long, involuntary celibacy she experienced, resulted in a desperate climax, and she collapsed against my chest. I kissed her lips gently. "I missed you, my love."

"I missed you too," she answered, even as I felt our bond establishing once again.

{Goddess Acquired: Goddess of Knowledge}

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{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 45

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33269}

{Pseudo-HP: 700 Mana: 2000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-One

“... so, you’re saying I’m now an actual divine entity,” Helga murmured as she lay in front of me, while I massaged her body. Partially to help her merge with her divine spark successfully, but more to continue touching her after our intense embrace.

As much as I wanted to continue, she needed a break. Not physically, as that was easy to bypass with magic, but mentally. As much as meeting again was elating for her, she still needed to process living in magical suspension for months, and experienced a close call with death due to an unforeseen magical complication with the wards.

So, while I massaged her naked body, I had given her a breakdown of my experiences, both the events that happened since my disappearance, and some of the pertinent details I had hidden from her during our encounters.

She took them better than I expected, which implied that their lives hadn’t been particularly easy in my absence — not that I needed evidence for that with the state of Silver Spires.

“Oh, you have always been a goddess for me,” I answered, which made her chuckle.

“You are a shameless flatterer,” she said, trying to complain, but it was hard to do with my hand caressing her sides gently. “I’m sure I can’t compare to that elven goddess.”

“Oh, someone is feeling jealous,” I said with a chuckle, leaning down to kiss her neck, and making her moan. “So cute,” I murmured as I pulled back, enjoying her shuffle. “But no need to be jealous. You’re already a pseudo-goddess, and we just need to find a location for you to complete the transformation to get away.”

“Does that mean we need to escape this plane?” she asked.

I frowned. “That, I don’t know yet. Running away is certainly safer, but that also means months of travel at best. Primordial Aether is not the friendliest place. Maybe hiding in plain sight is the better option, but for that, I need to know what exactly happened after my disappearance.”

“Actually, there’s not much I could tell,” Helga admitted. “We pulled back to Silver Spires after your warning, and organized the defenses. It was a good thing that we did, as it took just a day for the biggest monster horde we had seen to attack, sieging us nonstop for a month, and the moment we defeated it, they were replaced by the royal army.”

“Let me guess, they were much stronger than you expected,” I added.

“Yes, it was probably the Eternals supporting them directly,” Helga admitted. “That was much harder to defeat, but somehow, we still managed to do so ... but then, the System changed a month ago, giving us several levels, a lot of achievements, enhanced mana and HP regeneration, and promises for even more.”

“As long as you provided Divine Spark to it,” I said. Helga nodded. “I’m guessing you were the one that discovered the true source of Divine Spark and built that ward to steal the generated fragments from the main System.”

“Yes,” Helga said proudly, then wilted. “But it backfired. When we started absorbing the sparks directly, the Eternals decided to take a direct approach, and attacked with a small army of level-forty soldiers, each carrying weapons we had never seen before. Our wards were strong, and we managed to resist at first... But then, the System stopped.”

“Yes, that’s a nasty trick they have,” I said.

“I was in the middle of casting a Spark-Powered ward, so the sudden loss hit me particularly hard. I barely managed to ask the Princess to bring me to the safe house and set the wards, and I lost consciousness before I could arrive. The last thing I remember is a magical message from Titania, saying that they were trying to escape.”

“They are still alive. I can still feel them,” I explained. “I’m hoping that they are also free, as the search for them is still ongoing, but that, we can’t be sure about. It’s also likely that the Eternals captured them but didn’t bother actually informing the source.”

“And what are we going to do?” she asked.

I sighed even as I caressed her spine, making her shiver. “It’s your call. Retreating and finding a fragmented plane is the safest option. We can make your bond with the plane and strengthen you slowly, safe from intervention.”

“But it’s not the only option,” she commented, too smart not to notice my phrasing.

“No, we can also stay here, and you can bond with the area under the darkness ward. It should be enough to empower you to the next stage, and we could enhance the current ward to be more efficient and provide you with constant Divine Sparks from the school, especially if go and focus on the recovery of the school. But there are a lot of risks in doing so. I don’t know what would happen if the darkness ward ever breaks down, but I can’t imagine it being pretty.”

“We’re going to stay and save them,” Helga declared bravely, not waiting for even a second.

“My brave goddess,” I said as I kissed her. I wasn’t surprised by her decision, but that didn’t mean I wasn’t impressed. Not everyone could risk their lives directly for their friends — and I had no doubt that, they become even better friends under the constant siege.

“It’s only right—“ she started, only to gasp as I flipped her, and she ended up on her back, her beautiful breasts once again in my sight.

“Just because it’s right doesn’t mean people would do it,” I said even as I cupped her breasts, enjoying her moan. “It means you deserve a reward.”

“Oh, a reward,” she whispered. “Is it any better than your earlier reward?”

“Certainly,” I said as I caressed her curves, her stomach contracting as her body trembled in anticipation. “Earlier was a frantic greeting because I missed you. This is going to be a reward for my most beautiful and most knowledgeable goddess.”

“You’re exaggerating,” she whispered, followed by a moan as I tweaked her nipple.

“Oh, really? The only way to bond with a divine spark is to have the perfect alignment with it,” I explained. “Consider what it says about you to have such a unique alignment with something that I could only classify as the Spark of Knowledge.”

“I ... I don’t know,” she whispered, blushing shyly. It was good to see that, despite everything that happened, she was still shy enough to maintain her cuteness.

“Now, to the reward,” I said as I caressed her breasts before moving down, my movements getting less erotic and more patient. Her eyes widened as she realized what would follow. “That doesn’t feel like a reward,” she whispered.

“Nonsense, you’ll relax, and we’ll make sure you’re properly bonded with your Spark in the process. Don’t you want to be healthy so I won’t worry?”

“You’re playing dirty,” she growled.

I just chuckled. “Oh, sweetie. Did you forget? I always play dirty.” She moaned. “And, why are you complaining? It’s not like you don’t like it.”

“... maybe,” she whispered, followed by another moan. As my hands danced on her body, Tantric mana infused her body, not only allowing the Divine Spark to meld into her body perfectly, but also resolving the tightness of her muscles and healing the hidden dangers and

blockages.

And, as I worked her body, Helga moaned repeatedly, but stayed passive, letting me enjoy the show of her naked body once more. Soon, my focus was on the light perspiration she was developing, highlighting the beautiful contours of her curvy body, from her pouty lips to her shapely hips.

Pity I had already committed to teasing her, as I was already raging for another taste. “Now, let’s change your pose,” I said as I flipped her once more, but this time, I didn’t let her lay. Instead, I let her tense her arms and legs while pulling her up, making her create a triangle.

A very sexy, naked triangle, with her hips tensing even further. “Now, don’t move,” I warned her as I dragged my fingers along her inner thigh, close to her core. The way her legs trembled tempted me to cut this little game close, but I managed to reject that call.

Barely.

“Slide your foot further,” I told her instead while I caressed her inner thigh again, my mana circling inside her, removing the remaining signs of System from her body. I doubted that those fragments would do anything, but it was always better safe than sorry.

Though, I didn’t keep myself from teasing her. I pushed her to more and more tempting poses, which challenged me more than I was expecting, but it was good to see her frustrated expression.

I missed teasing her.

Ten minutes later, her beautiful slender fingers curled over my shoulders and pushed me down. Her strength was barely more than an ordinary person, which was shocking considering she had already bounded with her Divine Spark, and it should have worked enough to empower her.

But it seemed that the distorted nature of her spark didn’t enhance her physically, leaving her vulnerable.

However, she was quick to show that while the physical enhancement might have been limited, the exact opposite worked for her magical attitude. Two magical chains appeared and pulled me down, pinning me on the ground, their structure completely novel ... and more importantly, rapidly shifting as she experimented on them.

Her experimental capabilities had enhanced greatly, but I wasn’t able to talk about that, as she

used my bound state to climb on top of me. "My turn," she growled as she pushed herself down, her warmth wrapping around my girth.

She was impatient.

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 45

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33269}

{Pseudo-HP: 700 Mana: 2000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Two

“Someone has spent too much time with Cornelia —” I started, which was all I was able to say before Helga waved her hand, and her magic closed my mouth, silencing me.

“It’s punishment time, no talking,” she warned even as her hips started moving, riding me. I let out a muffled chuckle at the setup. Naturally, even if the spell she used was genius, she currently had access to a very limited amount of mana, and it couldn’t be compared to my reserves — and the less said about my ability to convert the mana from Aether, the better.

However, I didn’t use them, instead just struggled against the bonds physically.

To my shock, they were able to resist even as I applied enough Strength to reach twenty points. Impressive.

“You can’t escape without cheating with magic,” she declared smugly even as she put her hands on my chest, going back and forth, showing she was strongly underestimating my new physical abilities.

I let her continue to believe that. She earned the right for it, and I was happy to play at her own pace.

Particularly, considering the enthusiastic dance she was conducting on my lap was less of a chore and more of an excellent sexy dream. It took her several moments to get into a pace and control her initial pleasure.

A cheeky smile bloomed across her face.

She raised her hips and brought them down with a sudden change of pace. A jolt of pleasure shot up my spine while she looked down at me smugly. “It’s not fun when you’re the one being played, is it?” she asked.

I certainly disagreed. I was having a lot of fun, but my mouth was blocked, so saying that was difficult. Instead, I looked up, enjoying the dance of her tits while her legs splayed on both sides of me while her wetness spread along my length. She had pulled out, and limited herself to gliding along my length after her initial desperate ride.

She clearly wanted to play with me just as well.

“Patience,” she delivered, trying to sound smug as she slid down even more, and took my length

into her mouth, teasing the head. Pity she just sounded needy. She needed her orgasm even more than I did, her body trembling in anticipation.

She was cute, beautiful, and sexy at the same time.

God, I really missed her.

Unaware of my thoughts and focused on my shaft, she pulled back and breathed over my shaft, the sudden change making me shiver. Then, she returned sucking the sensitive head, treating it as a particularly sweet dish.

“ I figured you need some lazy pampering,” she whispered, though as I shifted my leg slightly so it rubbed against her wetness, she followed by a deep moan. “Naughty,” she gasped as she waved her hand, and two more chains appeared, this time along my legs.

Satisfied with her achievement, she went back to licking and suckling on my shaft, her fingers focusing on the base.

I tugged at the restraints playfully, acting like I was using the full range of my strength. She just chuckled. “You can’t escape those with brute force,” she whispered. “Too bad you’re behind in your magical studies, you naughty boy.”

The bindings had almost no give, holding my wrists spread, but it was her tone that made me shiver. She played the sexy yet disappointed teacher very well.

My body acted on its own, pushing my hips high just as her lips wrapped once again, touching at the entrance of her throat. She pulled back, and patted my chest playfully. “No need to be impatient,” she whispered, repeating my treatment earlier.

She clearly enjoyed having me tied and under her mercy.

I was tempted to let her play more. After all, she deserved a lot of rewards. Unfortunately for her, her last words made me even hornier than I expected ... and more importantly, I knew she would enjoy the reversal just as much.

I tugged the magical chains once more, and she grinned smugly.

A smug grin that disappeared when her magical chains shattered. “I-impossible,” she gasped, but that was all she was able to say as I ripped off my gag as well. “Not impossible,” I said as I grabbed her and rolled, and she ended up under me, her wrists grabbed by my hands. “Just

difficult.”

She smiled, which turned into panic as she realized a very important detail. There was no mana around her, not even a point she could use. “N-no,” she gasped.

“Did you know this barbarian discovered a way to create an anti-mana field,” I whispered. “A bit difficult to use in a practical manner, but very useful to teach a smug mage a lesson she couldn’t forget.

She flexed her muscles, trying to get out, her eyes wide as she stayed pinned. Though, as she struggled, it wasn’t despair that appeared on her face, but resignation.

And, intense arousal.

Even knowing it was impossible, she struggled to get free, each second making her feel a more intense arousal. She moaned as I pressed my shaft against her entrance, but she didn’t tense, clearly expecting me to tease her just like she had been doing.

I had a different plan in mind, one that was worthy of a barbarian who just captured a princess. I pushed hard, and her wetness swallowed me.

“It seems that you’re overestimating yourself against a barbarian warrior, you pitiful princess,” I said loudly. She might have answered, if it wasn’t for the moan that occupied her mouth. Instead, she undulated as best she could and squealed in delight as I impaled her mercilessly.

Invading her body with Tantric mana was almost an afterthought, hastening her binding. Too bad I couldn’t help her absorb Purified Spark without risking diluting the conceptual integrity of her merging.

Instead, I continued rocking my hips mercilessly, a simple move that I nonetheless turned into an art form despite its inherent simplicity. It wasn’t just an animalistic push, but a rough dance, the pace, the strength, the distance, all adding to her pleasure while I invaded her in reckless abandon.

There was only so much pleasure her body could endure before it succumbed to another orgasm, especially when she was as tense as she was. She closed her eyes, moans filling the room as the orgasm hit.

The healing spell I used ruined the barbarian role I was playing, but keeping her conscious was more important.

Her bleary eyes opened. “You haven’t blacked out and missed the fun, exalted mage,” I said mockingly, my grin wide enough to annoy her even under the circumstances. However, with my hips drilling ceaselessly, she didn’t have time to comment on that.

“You’re merciless,” she gasped.

“I know,” I whispered. “But you haven’t seen anything. After all, Strength is not my biggest stat..”

“And, what’s it?”

“Endurance,” I whispered. “Currently, it has sixty points.”

Her breath hitched when the implication of that number hit her, tensing in anticipation of pleasure. I continued banging her repeatedly, not giving her a chance to delude herself so that she could tire me out.

As her eyes closed to focus on the pleasure, she didn’t seem to be particularly against the idea.

I impaled her again and again, reshaping her wet hole for my presence once more. She just groaned and moaned, her body losing every hint of energy it possessed. She was limp and obedient.

Until another orgasm hit, and she involuntarily bucked against my hold despite the impossibility of getting free, earning a chuckle.

“You’re still acting out, maybe you deserve another punishment,” I whispered. Another small spell to cheat, this time to ready her backdoor entrance for my invasion, I pulled out, and slipped into her tightness.

The sudden intrusion was enough to earn a cry from her, which was a perfect mixture of pain and pleasure. “You’re nothing but an anal slut for my barbaric cock, you pitiful mage,” I growled.

“No, I’m not pitiful,” she gasped.

“Oh, really,” I said, and suddenly, I flipped once more before letting her hands go free. “Here, I stopped. Are you saying that you have the willpower to just pull back?”

“You’re a fucking bastard,” she growled, but that was all she said before she put her hands on my chest, using it as leverage as she rode me desperately, doing her best to climax from anal

penetration. With her panting and trembling, it didn't take long for her to reach another climax.

This time, she wasn't alone. As the orgasm hit her and her ass tightened around me, I exploded in her as well, filling her with my seed.

She collapsed against my chest, barely conscious. "You're such an evil man," she growled. "You're lucky that I love you."

"I love you too," I answered, hugging her as she fell asleep, the emotional highs and physical challenges finally catching up with her. She earned her rest.

I closed my eyes as well, but for me, there was no sleep.

I still needed to plan her divine domain. We could afford no mistake with her fate.

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 45

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33269}

{Pseudo-HP: 700 Mana: 2000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Three

The linchpin of our success was in creating a domain in Silver Spires.

Even in ruins, with its old luster lost, Silver Spires was still the closest thing I knew to a pure center of learning and research, with a focus on more. The intense action of studying created Divine Spark.

Of course, even the most focused mage lost in the studying generated only a fraction of the concept that could be termed as Knowledge Spark. Despite the students counting in thousands and the total population in tens of thousands, we would be lucky if we could reach a two-digit Knowledge Spark harvest daily ...

“... the fourth section has a problem with the subsection, it’s breaking the whole structure. Correct it,” Helga cut in my work, her attention intense.

We were working on the collection array to make sure we could collect Divine Spark from the students before the System could devour, made out of a mixture of Arcana wards and Darkness mana. The initial ward had been established in a hurry, and therefore imperfect, barely able to pick a few points of Divine Spark every day, less than a point could be defined as Knowledge spark.

Of course, looking back, it was a happy accident. If that hadn’t been the case, Helga probably would have met with an unfortunate end even with the suppression of the crystal platform.

“Why don’t you fix it yourself then, goddess,” I growled in mock anger as I slapped her ass — her naked ass, as we missed each other far too much to bother wearing clothes, which was pointless considering we ended up entangled with every couple of ours.

“Why should I bother when I have my servant with me to deal with that trivial things. Anyone could handle those mundane things.”

She was smiling teasingly as she said that, and I chuckled as well. Naturally, she knew just how difficult was to create such a complicated control ward. Even with all the practice I had outside the System — which created a much more delicate warding tradition due to the absence of the system’s constant devouring — the only reason I was able to create the delicate ward she had designed was my immense stats.

And the fact that, under the layer of Darkness mana, the System didn’t drain its mana

completely and ruin its structure.

However, no matter my casting capabilities and my Intelligence stat, I couldn't have come up with that design. Intelligence and Wisdom were excellent at supporting rapid learning, and they allowed me to adapt the things I had known to other traditions ... but inventing completely new methods was far more different.

Helga had always been better at that, and it only got better once she merged with the Knowledge stat. Together, we made an excellent team.

Not to mention, it was fun to work with, I decided as I suddenly stabilized the ward and stopped working, and pushed Helga on the same huge desk we had the plans, putting our nudity to the best usage once more.

"You're insatiable," she moaned, her hips responding already. "We need to work."

"The first stage is already complete, and the second stage could wait a few minutes."

"Minutes," she chuckled. "Don't tell me the great Caesar finally exhausted and turned into a quick shooter."

I laughed. "You asked for it. Hours it is," I said as I slapped her ass, she giggled, and we started ruining the plans on the desk once again...

The reason I was quick to stop was because we had managed to complete the first stage of the ward, which was the urgent aspect.

The first part focused on the Knowledge Spark. Based on several incredible leaps Helga managed to come up with, we had managed to enhance the identification capabilities of the ward several times, so it only collected what could be converted into Knowledge spark, and didn't target any other spark.

That way, we were able to collect the majority of the spark Helga needed and store it, feeding into a ward of purified mana to soften slightly so Helga could absorb and bond with it. That way, she would be able to receive several points of Spark every day ... likely doubling her Knowledge Spark stores in ten days, from a hundred to two hundred.

Of course, ultimately, it was nothing. For us to even have a hope of making a stand against the Eternal, she would need hundreds of thousands of Spark, not just a hundred ... but it was to be concerned for the future.

For now, we were happy with the linear growth.

The second stage of the ward was different. It was mainly for my benefit, which was the reason I was willing to delay a couple more hours for fun. Essentially, the aim was to create a secondary collection mechanism with its own filters so it could convert the other Divine Sparks, purify, and store them for my convenience.

Unfortunately, that was only a marginal benefit, as the amount we could collect was limited. Even if we collected everything the school produced, it would probably mean a hundred sparks, and we certainly didn't dare to collect all of it.

We had no idea whether the System could track the source of the Divine Spark it collected — but I certainly suspected there was, even if it was not too accurate — and if it did, the sudden dip of the Divine Spark would be noticed.

Pity we couldn't just spread that ward under every single city, but that was not possible. First, and the simplest reason. We didn't have enough Darkness mana. The ones that had been collected for months were barely enough to serve our needs.

Not to mention, multiple locations increased the risk of being caught. One location, we could defend ... multiple, we could not, and I didn't want the Eternals to have any purified spark.

Who knew how they would use it.

I wished I could use the various types of other Sparks that were being generated, but it was impossible. Because, every single fragment had a slight difference, and required a central mentality to focus and channel it, allowing it to coalesce into a coherent piece of spark.

If that had been the case, I would have been far more enthusiastic about collecting the fragments through that ward.

I might have been able to use it to grow my current Companion crystals, but even then it would have limits. Doubling the size might have been possible, though even that would have been a stretch. Anymore, and it would lose its coherence and I would be forced to purify it.

I experimented with Nature Spark many times during my lengthy stay to get a better understanding of Divine Spark.

With both paths closed, I focused on empowering the sexy blonde who was currently riding with reckless abandon, her huge tits dancing with each push to send tingles through me. The

pleasure that filled me was incredible...

However, the melding of our souls as I slowly guided her Divine-infused soul was even more impressive.

It was the other part of my strategy of empowering her. By carefully leading her external senses, I was allowing her to bond with the area that was under the darkness ward, creating an absolute Divine Domain.

By that way, her Divine Domain would be established where she had near-absolute power, the Darkness was keeping it safely out detection.

At first glance, it seemed like a terrible choice. After all, other gods and goddesses had world fragments to themselves. What was the benefit of such a small domain to rule, when the enemies could easily surround ... or ignore considering it was even tucked underground.

Worse, she would be bound to that small area, unable to leave unless she uprooted herself, which was only possible by a terrible price, reversing her complete divinity. Together, no other god or goddess would actually do such a thing.

But, Helga was certainly a special case.

Her Divine Spark was unique, and even if she had a huge domain to herself, I doubted she would be able to defend it successfully against another avatar ...

Instead, we had to find other ways to use her advantages. But, those exact plans for the future. First, she needed to establish her Divine Domain and complete her Apotheosis, which required some time.

And, lots and lots of sex.

“Move faster, my whore goddess,” I moaned as I spanked her tits, making them dance as I enjoyed the tingling sensation it created. Her moans rose higher and higher, resonating with her surroundings, and that was not just a figure of speech.

I could feel that she was slowly assimilating the surrounding area into her divine domain, some of her Divine Spark dancing outside her body. It was the one advantage of creating such a small Divine Domain, that she was able to afford the consumption of the Apotheosis.

Taking a comfortable step into the divinity.

Now, it was my turn to support her...

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 47

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33275}

{Pseudo-HP: 700 Mana: 2000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Four

Soon after the fun, I managed to complete the urgent tasks in my underground layer. The second layer of the ward was established, Helga's Divine Domain started to coalesce, and security measures were established.

It was time for me to leave once more.

I didn't want to do that. I had missed Helga greatly, and another separation, no matter how short, was not a welcome development. Unfortunately, I had two important priorities. One was to empower her, and the other was to find the rest of the girls.

Neither could be done in Silver Spires.

Finding the others was obvious ... searching for them couldn't be done from Silver Spires. The school was already away from the centers of power even before my arrival, a haven for the noble children to slowly develop. The current situation isolated it even further. Trying to find the girls from there was not only inefficient, but any new spy ring would be caught easily.

Strengthening Helga was trickier. Increasing the production of the Divine Spark was very simple. The more students in Silver Spires, working to improve themselves through a study of magic, the more Divine Spark fragments there would be generated ... and the faster Helga would get stronger.

Unfortunately, while it was simple, it was not easy.

Silver Spires were effectively in a political exile, and were being deliberately suppressed. I could easily take the role of the headmaster in disguise or put a puppet before increasing the student intake ... but that would get the attention of the royal family, which then in turn bring the Eternals down.

However, trying to set up another school from scratch was an even more complicated process, and if a mysterious organization suddenly grew from nothing and surpassed Silver Spires in numbers, it would be even more difficult.

Political problems require political solutions...

So, I decided to travel to the Royal Capital, the biggest city on the material plane. Not only I could make the necessary moves that could be leveraged, but also I could set up the feelers necessary to an extent.

Admittedly, my melancholy about leaving her was a bit exaggerated, as I still have my ability to teleport back and forth, but with the several self-assigned missions that needed to be launched at once, I would be extremely busy.

There were people to be hired, spies to be organized, businesses created ... no, I would be extremely busy, and it couldn't be simply done by just disguising as a servant.

It was why I was at city gates, driving a large carriage while wearing armor, a huge hammer on my back, and my hand scarred with flames. My outfit shouted blacksmith, and my cart was filled with exquisite weapons ... well, exquisite from a commoner perspective, as forging them took barely an hour with the help of my magic.

It was just there to establish a business, waiting for my turn at line, just to enter the outer city. Finally, it was my turn.

The guards looked disappointed at my arrival. After all, I was a sole traveler, which meant little money they could skim from the top.

"Reason for arrival," one asked.

"I'm a blacksmith, trying to establish a business," I answered. At my mention, their gaze widened, and grew even bigger once they looked at the cart.

"That's a lot of weapons," one said, their eyes glinting with greed.

The other joined immediately. "Bringing that many weapons into the city is suspicious. We need to check them carefully."

"You're right, of course," I answered, but didn't act panicking. Instead, I grabbed two swords, both considerably better than what they had, and passed them to the guards. "How about now. The number should be acceptable," I said.

The guards didn't answer, and I immediately grabbed more, this time two daggers, and their greed was stoked even further as I passed it to them, thinking that I was easy to extort. "We still need to..." he started while he played with his new sword.

"How about I check your old sword as well," I said, and before he could react, I grabbed his old sword. "A piece of garbage," I said as I bent it, and it immediately shattered.

The expression of the guards changed immediately. "On second thought, the numbers look

more than satisfactory,” the guards changed their attitude, even ready to give the swords back.

“Good, you can keep them,” I said as I rode the cart into the city.

After all, my aim was not to avoid the guards or somehow save one or two weapons. If that had been the case, I could have just sneaked into the city and silently established a business.

No, I wanted everyone to know that a formidable blacksmith had arrived in the city, one that appeared from nothing... Which was not that uncommon in a world that was ruled by the system. A strong soul space and a certain amount of recklessness — and a lot of luck, both to survive against the monsters and to get decent achievements — was all that was needed for someone to climb up to the peak from nowhere.

Of course, while such entrances burned brightly, they were usually suppressed soon after. Oeyne’s fate was a good example. An incredible blacksmith who could forge enchantments directly to the metal, yet she had been suppressed until she had to escape to Silver Spires and live ignobly.

I wanted to replicate that trick.

There were multiple reasons for choosing a blacksmith. First of all, a blacksmith was not immediately threatening. Oh, they could take down a lot of low-level people if they had time, but that was true for every high-level individual. They lacked area-of-effect impact, which was what mages dangerous. Which meant, that blacksmiths represented opportunity rather than danger.

Especially when they were not a part of the Guild.

Which was the second part of my trick. I wanted the Guild to target me. Not because my objective was to actually hurt them — no, that was a nice side benefit — but I wanted a reason to expand aggressively, sell my weapons at the cheap, and helplessly align with a lot of parties despite the apparent disadvantages.

I was willing to give away my weapons for free as long as I could establish the necessary connections, but such disadvantageous actions would require an important reason — which the guild should provide with their arrogant ways.

Such connections should give me the necessary political connections so I could poke and prod the decisions about Silver Spires once I understood the political landscape. I could always pull some more obvious actions as a last resort, but I wanted to see if I could resolve it with some

soft touches first.

Another advantage was the recruiting. I needed to hire and assess a lot of mages, with a preference for low-level and non-combat roles that might be desperate to accept a mysterious role; to create some additional source of Divine Spark for Helga ... or maybe even find a few good candidates to be raised as Chosen.

Amusingly, a blacksmith's identity was better than a mage for it. To get a lot of apprentice candidates, a mage should be very high level, and such a high level one was expected to be discerning. And, if not, they would get a lot of unwelcome attention.

Making a blacksmith identity far more useful for recruitment.

Of course, while they were important, none of them was the main reason.

I wanted to send a message to Oeyne.

The girls were being hunted, and naturally, they would be very carefully hidden. I couldn't find them directly, and since they weren't stupid, they wouldn't try to find me without having a reason to believe I returned.

The weapons I planned to sell would be that reason. I had worked together with Oeyne for a long time, and I knew her style intimately, just like she knew mine. By creating tens of thousands of weapons in that exact style and flooding the market with them cheaply, it would be a message for them.

Hopefully, the cheap prices I would push as I fought with the Guild would allow those weapons to spread all along the Empire, while the story of their creation would lead her right back to Capital.

Which was the most dangerous yet the safest place for her.

Pity I didn't have a similar way to connect with the rest, or it would have been much easier.

"One step at a time,," I murmured as I moved toward the commercial district at the outer city, ready to plunge the capital into a smithing crisis.

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33280}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Five

It didn't take long for me to purchase a large building with a huge garden. The properties in the capital weren't exactly cheap, but I wasn't exactly hurting for money either.

Especially since a magical weapon could easily be used as money. Four magical great swords, six longswords, and two bows allowed me to purchase the building with little fanfare. The owner tried to bargain, but a threat about going to another building was enough to stop his attempts to bargain further.

I also used an agent to purchase the surrounding buildings ... but for the moment, kept that particular detail a secret. Subterfuge and teleportation were a very useful combination for that purpose.

The sellers didn't argue much. Especially since I was significantly overpaying for the old, poorly maintained buildings ... but considering my first action was to demolish it completely before I set up a temporary workshop in the open, it was hardly a problem.

Then, I started forging myself a house, made entirely of bronze and steel, right out in the open.

At first, it looked like a needless expense, especially as I was visibly using parts from Class Ten beasts to strengthen the metal further, but there were three benefits to it.

First, it was the best advertisement I could create. As I forged out there in the open, a huge crowd gathered in the streets, piling around to watch me work. Not everyone could meet with someone with Grandmaster Blacksmithing skill.

Of course, technically, I didn't have that skill anymore. Luckily, for that, the guild helped, which formed my second benefit.

From the window of the nearest building, three people with Grandmaster Blacksmithing skill watched me. I had no doubt that they were sent by the higher-ups to assess the threat of the sudden appearance of another Grandmaster, and what was the best way of communication.

And, to do that, they needed to assess my true range of mastery. Not only in terms of skills, but also the key stats, particularly, Strength, Precision, and Endurance.

However, they were unaware that their presence was helping me greatly.

No matter how strong my stats were, without my Skills, I was at a disadvantage. Luckily, their

presence helped me resolve that particular problem.

A string of pure mana, mixed with darkness mana to keep it hidden, connecting to their soul space directly, subtly stimulating their Skill. It was a variant of the trick the Crown Princess pulled, but rather than letting the system create an artificial soul-space on a clone for me to control, I tapped the information flow of an existing one.

It was a difficult trick, especially with a Grandmaster-level skill. Rather than my soul space creating a cushion for me to absorb it slowly and steadily, the information flooded my mind mercilessly, leaving me with a nasty headache even with my Intelligence helping me greatly to filter through the knowledge ... but the benefits were incredible.

I could sense my forging capabilities improving with each second. It wasn't as good as directly having the skill ... but then, unlike having the skill, it couldn't simply disappear.

Altogether, it was much more preferable.

The third benefit was simpler. I didn't use my own mana to forge, but using incredible amounts of monster parts still created a temporary cloud of mana that created some interference despite the constant devouring of the System, which allowed me to create a deep tunnel toward the bottom, and several secret basements, which would ultimately be very useful.

More and more people gathered around the place as my metal house started to rise, and at the edge, a line grew ... potential customers, much to the distaste of the guild members.

It was fun, but unfortunately, I had a lot of things to do, so I stopped after two days, only after building two floors, with the potential to build more.

Then, I grabbed a huge metal plate, and started carving letters on it before I hung at the walls.

And the crowd exploded in shocked whispers.

It was an announcement, one that told that I was recruiting apprentices for forging, as well as mages capable of enchantment. Each role had several requirements such as level, skills, and minimum stats, which was not exactly shocking especially since I kept them deliberately low.

No, their gossip was triggered by the last line.

No official guild affiliates were allowed.

A declaration of war.

The guild members scoffed at my daring as they left, probably to deliver their findings to the headquarters so that they could teach a lesson to someone daring to challenge them. Arrogance, they thought without a doubt.

Admittedly, it didn't take long for me to see an immediate impact. The huge line of people waiting to purchase my weapons suddenly scattered like chickens, afraid of angering the guild. Only a fraction stayed, and I had no doubt some of them actually belonged to the guild, wanting to buy some of my works for detailed examination.

I ignored them as I put another plate ... one that showed a detailed price conversion list. One that contained a huge amount of materials, from common iron and copper to very rare gems and monster parts, each with a direct point equivalent.

I wanted to preempt the most obvious trick the guild would pull against me, blocking the sale of the supplies.

I didn't know if it would actually work to give me the materials I needed. I preferred it if it did, as it would keep me from going around purchasing materials from other cities under different identities before teleporting back ... or stealing from the guild warehouses.

I could do both, but I preferred not to waste time.

The moment I put the price list on, the line started to grow once more, with several people who had left the line earlier returning.

The temptation of my prices, half of the official guild prices for the same quality of weapons was hard to turn down.

At a distance, I could see the guild members signaling to their member, who was third in line. The first two quickly purchased a weapon each, cradling them like newborn children. Then, it was the turn of the third one. "I'll buy everything," he declared proudly.

"No," I answered simply.

"What do you mean, no?" he asked. "I'm willing to pay the full price."

"No, I'm not going to sell all my stock to guild dogs so you can continue to swindle the poor fighters that stand against the endless monsters that surround us," I said, deliberately shouting.

"I'm not a guild member. How dare you—" he started, then, suddenly stopped.

Which might about my fingers around his throat as I lifted him up, and threw him away like a ragdoll. Everyone on the line froze while I turned and walked back to the price board, and added another line.

'Each customer is limited to one weapon.'

That made a lot of people grumble in frustration, and a few more left their places on the line, but more people filled the line ... until I sold everything. A few people used monster parts to pay, but most just paid with money.

Understandable, as not everyone just walked around with their carts filled with iron.

"You can stay in the line if you want. I will be selling at least fifty weapons each day. The number will increase if I can find some competent apprentices."

With that, I started moving my workshop inside, a trivial task with my immense strength, ignoring the two other growing lines, one for forging apprentices, and one for mages that would work as enchanters. They had been gossiping and fighting, but I didn't care too much about it.

As long as I had some helpers to look convincing, it was enough.

After all, it was just a cover for the real thing.

Of course, while I was busy with that, people were already trying to purchase the surrounding buildings, most I had already purchased. I didn't sell any of them, but some, I deliberately let them rent, letting spies fill the places.

Others, I had put on various disguises as I covered them with wards, acting as I belonged to some other group that was spying on me as well... By that way, I would be able to act much freer while blaming some mysterious third party.

At the same time, I quickly interviewed the apprentices, kicking only the most obvious spies out while letting in the rest.

Just like that, everything was ready...

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{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33280}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Six

The three days passed without anything notable. I had hired a lot of apprentices who worked day and night to process the raw materials while I forged weapons without stopping in my private forge. In those three days, I stayed focused on the operations of the forge.

Naturally, there were some attempts to block me. For example, no supplier in the whole capital was willing to sell anything to me ... and more interestingly, the guards suddenly became far more proactive in searching the carts, stopping and confiscating any forging material that didn't belong to official suppliers.

I was able to bypass that blockade using teleportation, which probably left the guild members scratching their heads about their apparent failure.

However, I ignored all of it as I faced a young enchanter who was trying to solve the problem I had given to her. She was the first one who had managed to solve the unofficial test I had given her, making her a good candidate for my plan.

Now, she was trying to solve a deceptively simple Arcana ward structure and turn it into an enchantment. She was nowhere near solving it, but she still made good progress ... most importantly, she was willing to understand and solve it despite her skills being useless, which meant she was a good candidate as a magical assistant.

Was she perfect, no. But I had to start from somewhere; and under the circumstances, speed was far more useful than the alternative.

So, I approached her when she was alone. She tensed when she noticed me, which was understandable as I used a disguise. I ignored it as I spoke. "You have true potential in magic," I declared as I let my voice gain an incredible cadence. "Tell me, girl. Are you willing to learn the secrets of true magic?" I said.

"Who are you. And, w-what do you mean?" she asked, looking suspicious, but I raised my hand, and a useless ball of mana appeared on my hand. Useless, but nearly impossible to create without an average stat distribution over thirty, along with a good understanding of Arcana mana.

She gasped in shock. "B-but, why here..." she said as she watched the rotating ball.

"Because this place is such a distraction, one of the many places we recruit our true students.

People capable of understanding the truth about the magic,” I said, exaggerating slightly.

A bit rude, but it was a recruitment pitch. Hardy an avenue of accuracy.

“May I think about it?” she asked.

“No,” I answered. “Either accept or leave.”

She looked at me in disbelief. “I can leave. What if I tell others?”

“And people will believe you?” I countered with a smirk. Of course, I wouldn’t actually let her leave, but instead put her into some kind of sleep for a few weeks, which should be enough for my trick here to turn useless.

She looked confused, while I tapped into my Light node slightly, and the Arcana mana turned into light mana, still dancing elegantly...

“I accept,” she admitted. It was a bit hurried, of course, but understandable. She was a mere six-level mage, and already at her limit, which put her slightly above a common worker even with her surprisingly decent precision stat. And, I had already researched her. No family, no close friends. Perfect target for our organization.

Which was certainly not a cult. Right?

All of those factors made her easy to accept my abrupt suggestion. Not to mention, with my display of power, I had about a thousand different ways of harming her if I wished. Ironically, it made it easier for her to believe me.

“Good.”

“What do I need to do?” she asked.

“Nothing,” I said as I grabbed her shoulder, covered her with mana, and teleported. She gasped in shock as she saw the chaos of the Aether, but before she could register, we were under Silver Spires.

“Hello, love,” I greeted Helga with a searing kiss, distracting her from studying.

After she pulled back, she noticed our guest. “A candidate,” she asked.

“Yes, the first student of your chapter,” I answered, following our previously agreed lie. Since I

recruited her acting like an already existing organization, we needed an excuse as to why there were no other students.

Building a new chapter was a good excuse.

I didn't bother asking, but I was sure she still believed us to be under the capital. A good thing for the students to believe.

"I'll leave you two to get acquainted," I said, and after another kiss, I teleported away. When I returned, I used an illusion to look like our first student, exited the building, walked into an alley next to a building I hired for guild spies ... and disappeared.

If I could use a string of disappearances on the guild, it would be even better.

But, for now, I hadn't taken any action. It would be more effective if I could point out several disappearances.

After I 'disappeared' in the alley, I returned to the base, only to change into another disguise and leave. However, this time, my disguise was deliberately poor. At a distance, I could already see several spies following me while I stepped into a black carriage waiting for me.

In the carriage, there was a servant waiting for me, serving me a drink. "My lord is glad that you have decided to take his meeting. You won't be disappointed. He's the one that can break the guild's resistance."

"I don't need his help against a bunch of pencil pushers that forgot how to hold a hammer," I answered, arrogant and direct just like a stereotypical man who spent all his time dealing with forging than other humans. That rash and careless attitude were not exactly designed to achieve optimal political objectives.

But it allowed me to poke around the complex web of political alliances easily, without care. "I have already told him what I need from him. If he's unwilling to deliver that, you might stop the carriage right now."

"Don't worry about it, grandmaster," he said. "My prince is happy to give you what you need as long as you supply him with what you promised."

I waved my hand. "Just a thousand sets of armor. It's nothing," I said as I bragged shamelessly, but said nothing else. Even when the carriage left the city walls. A while later, a group joined us on horseback, carrying bows, but the lack of reaction from the servant suggested that they

were pre-arranged bodyguards.

I might have tensed if I was just a fighter as I led them to believe, so I decided to put that show on. My fingers tightened around the glass while I looked out of the window, subtly fidgeting. As we moved away from the capital, not using the main road, more than one monster attacked us.

But, with a full squad of bodyguards around us, nothing happened.

“Our royal guards are very competent,” he commented. Which, I had to agree with. Of eight bodyguards, the weakest was level sixteen. Already at his level cap, but with a decent stat distribution. The strongest was level twenty-two ... but with some interesting Skills. Like, having illusion magic rather than a melee ability.

A spy, and a very good one from the looks of it. I felt flattered.

I was already worth mobilizing such an important asset.

“Since we’re approaching the residence of our prince, would you like refreshes about the etiquette, grandmaster?” he asked.

“No need,” I said. “I’m a blacksmith here to talk business. He can summon one of the frogs from the court if he needs to be entertained,” I said, glad that my character didn’t require me to bow and scrape.

I certainly didn’t want another year acting as some kind of servant.

It took almost half an hour for us to arrive at the mansion of the prince, though even if I didn’t know about the owner, it wouldn’t have been hard to guess. The first reason was the lavish nature of the place, as who else would have walls covered with gold and gems.

I would have understood if they were a part of the wards, but I could sense that it was not the case. There was no mana connection, just opulence.

Of course, that didn’t mean there was no magical protection. I could sense several wards, layered on top of each other, though they prioritized defense over counterattack, all under a central point of control. Clearly, they assumed that, for any attack, they would receive reinforcements in quick order.

The wards were strong yet simple ... and certainly not resource-efficient. Clearly, the royal family was not lacking in money or other resources... Curious, I dug deeper into the structure,

trying to see if there was a nasty surprise, like a surprise addition by the Eternals that would trap me ... but it seemed clean.

“We’re here,” the servant said, and I stepped out as I arrived at the inner court.

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{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33280}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Seven

As we arrived at the courtyard, I felt the wards settle over me, giving me a sense of suppression. Not because they were particularly strong, but because I didn't appreciate the sensation of being under the wards that weren't under my control.

The fact that they assumed I was magically insensitive made it worse. They didn't even bother adjusting the intensity, giving me a sense of suppression, tempting me to break them.

I ignored the weight along with the servant that led me inside and instead focused on my surroundings ... particularly the guards, making sure that there was no one that could threaten me like an undercover Eternal soldier.

Luckily, it seemed that their entanglement with the royal family wasn't at the level of filling the residence of every prince. Maybe they had a few spies, but no one that they bothered to empower.

Good, I thought as walked through the official entrance, the inner wards parting as well, allowing me to effortlessly bypass the strongest part of the defenses. As I passed them, an upbeat melody reached to my ears, marking a celebration.

The servant continued to escort me, and I noticed the nobles filling the place. I looked rather absurd among them, my blacksmith outfit contrasting greatly with the rich nobles that filled the place. I looked like a barbarian among them.

Naturally, I noticed more than one mocking whisper about my clothing ... though they made sure to keep that whisper down. After all, I also represented an important source of high-quality weapons, hence my invitation. They didn't want to lose such a great opportunity just in case.

Soon, they led me to a garden, one that was filled with a lot of noble guests, and even more servants keeping them well-fed while dancers and musicians kept them entertained.

At the center, there was the prince that invited me. To my surprise, rather than waiting for his servant to lead me to him like it was appropriate, he jumped up to his feet and walked toward me with quick steps. "And, the guest of honor of today's party is finally here," he declared loudly. "The courageous blacksmith that dared to strike against the suffocating dominance of the blacksmith guild!" he greeted.

I couldn't help but smile as the prince greeted me in such an explosive manner. It was a great

honor, to the point of being absurd ... meaning he needed something important from me, important enough to greet me with such aggression.

Interesting.

“My Prince,” I said, giving a slight bow ... one that was far too weak to be respectful to a royal, especially coming from a peasant, even a high-level one.

Immediately, I noticed several frowns around, but the prince managed to hide his distaste quickly as he led me toward a table that was occupied by about a dozen noblemen and noblewomen who were resting, enjoying wine and food.

Most of them were unfamiliar, and some I recognized from my research. None of them were particularly important, meaning the prince didn't call any of his important supporters, not wanting to insult them with my presence.

It would have been quite a hidden insult if I cared the slightest. Instead, I listened as the prince rattled over my ear for almost an hour, while I listened to his nonsense. Luckily, the food was enjoyable — even though once again, they went for the flash rather than quality, assuming I was easy to trick.

My job got even easier.

Finally, he gestured to a servant, and they led the other guests away, leaving me alone with the prince. “I need your help for a topic that's vital for the fate of our country, Grandmaster,” he said, once again exaggerating his compliments.

“What exactly do you need, my prince,” I said, but even as I did so, I reached his soul space and subtly suppressed his stats.

Not that it was difficult. He was merely level twelve. His stats were unnaturally high, but that was to be expected with the potential knowledge of the royal family. However, I didn't push my Charisma yet. “I need your help repairing a weapon,” he said.

“There's no weapon I can't repair,” I declared.

“Good to see you're confident,” he declared, relaxing visibly as I accepted the task.

“I can just take it with me. I promise you that it'll be repaired in a week at most,” I added, feeling free to promise. It was easy to promise things when I didn't expect to actually fulfill

them.

The prince had a sheepish expression, one that he did his best to look casual, but I could sense a sudden tenseness. “Unfortunately, that would not do. The weapon we have to repair is a secret treasure, and you have to visit it.”

“That’s acceptable, but that means I have to first stay in my new business and make sure everything is in order, my prince,” I said, finally pushing the magical weight of my stats against him, and he immediately looked dazed.

Privacy wards around us had some defensive features to block me from using my Charisma aggressively, but interfering with those defensive features was even easier than temporarily suppressing his stats.

“It’s ... problematic,” the prince admitted, dazed. “It’s really important for that weapon to be repaired. It might be the key to putting me on the throne.”

“What kind of weapon are we talking about, my prince?” I asked, even though I already guessed the answer.

“A spear,” he replied, and immediately, the memory of a broken spear popped into my mind. It seemed that the fourth prince had some substantial benefits from the attack against my girls.

“Very good, my prince. I can repair it, but before I can justify my lengthy disappearance, I need to set up my operation. How about if you put me a hefty order. Maybe something like ten thousand weapons.”

“What would I do with that many weapons?” he asked. “I can’t even afford such a huge order.”

“It will be only good for your eventual bid to the throne if it’s known that one of the royal princes cares about the ordinary citizens of the public,” I said, as I did so, I started to increase the pressure on the Charisma, but with it, started to add several spells to further muddle his thinking.

The spells were hard to cast, pushing my capabilities to their limits, but I needed them to convince him of my words. “I sincerely believe that you care about us peasants, my prince. It’s why I, a peasant blacksmith that had risen from nothing, is supporting you with all my Strength, enough to forge ten thousand weapons for free so that you can build up your reputation against your brothers, and gain the throne.”

The spell and my words were calculated. Even with the spells, I couldn't just brainwash him to actually care about the peasants. However, it was possible to quickly convince him that he managed to successfully tricked me into that fact.

Therefore, he wouldn't suddenly find it suspicious that I started to support him with a lot of free weapons.

"Of course. You're one of my greatest supporters because you believe in my true cause," he quickly answered, even his dazed state unable to prevent him from lying to increase my support. "And, you're right, visible support to peasants would help my cause," he said.

In that moment, I enhanced the pressure even more, and put him in a trance. "However, you have to do something striking for your sudden support against the peasants to be convincing. Why not sponsor a sudden influx of new magical students from all corners of the Empire? That way, everyone will be excited for a new Emperor that actually cared about his citizens."

"Hmm," he hummed, too dazed to say something as I did my best to push that idea into his subconsciousness, repeating it again and again. This part of the trick, I was using for the first time, so I wasn't particularly sure how effective it would be.

But it couldn't hurt.

Hopefully, it would work and he would start pushing for more peasant intake for Silver Spires quickly, which would give Helga a much better source for Knowledge Spark.

I slowly lessened the pressure once more. "Now, my prince. Let's focus on exactly how can I support you by providing you with all those weapons," I said. "I can deliver at least five hundred weapons a day, maybe even a thousand if you can help me resolve my problem of acquiring high-quality metal ores..."

With that, our private meeting turned normal. Soon, we came to an agreement that I would stay and supply him with endless weapons that he would distribute toward the locations that were struggling most with the monster attacks, and in a few weeks, I would move to that secret base to repair that mysterious spear.

Naturally, he didn't mention anything about Silver Spires, but when I mentioned it, he just smiled smugly like he had a genius idea.

With that, the first step of my plan was complete. Now, I just needed to return to the capital and start working.

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33280}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Eight

The party had lasted until the first lights of the morning, with every single noble getting completely hammered with the magically reinforced wine that was served without a stop.

Of course, not one to miss an opportunity, I used that Charisma trick to sell the idea of expanding Silver Spires by allowing peasants to attend. Of course, some believed that it would help them profit by getting more mages, while others believed that such a trick would support their houses. Some even believed it was an attack against their political opponents.

Ultimately, their reasons didn't matter. The important thing was, they were quite a bit convinced by the genius idea of the prince — who finally declared his plan toward the end of the night, when he was utterly drunk — much to the consternation of his steward.

However, I didn't care about that as I once again entered the cart they assigned to me, and started traveling back to the capital. After an evening of dealing with an annoying number of nobles, I wanted to do something actually productive.

Like starting to forge the weapons I 'promised' to the fourth prince. Hopefully, by pushing servants as well, I would be able to hasten their distribution. Oeyne should be able to discover that if she was free. If she was not ... well, that was something for the future.

For the moment, that was the best I could do before I could establish a proper spy organization. Which was simply impossible to do quickly. Maybe, as I 'proved' myself to the prince, I would be able to get in contact with the royal spies, giving me a chance to subvert their organization.

Too bad I was simply too busy to poke around them.

As the carriage moved, my mind was already on how to forge those weapons ... when I felt a movement outside. The assigned bodyguards were moving ... six of them suddenly burst into action, and killed the other two.

I used my magic to observe their performance, trying to see if they could actually threaten me.

The answer was ... they could not.

Still, I gathered some mana from the Aether dimension and created an invisible ward underneath the carriage that was ready to explode outward just in case.

At the same time, I pulled out my hammer and kicked the door open. "What's going on, you

cowards,” I shouted, but seeing I was facing six, I stayed tense and defensive.

“No need to panic, Grandmaster,” one of my supposed bodyguards said with a large, threatening smile. “We’re just going to have a nice talk and nothing more.”

“Interesting way of inviting me for a talk,” I said, doing my best to look panicked and intimidated by the sudden reversal. Though, I was more interested in the implications of the sudden attack ... the residence of the fourth prince must be filled with an incredible amount of spies for six of my eight assigned bodyguards to work for his enemies.

Likely his brothers.

Of course, even as I faked a scared look, I made sure not to make it too exaggerated. After all, I was supposed to be a high-level warrior who climbed without any help, even with my blacksmith skills dragging me down.

I couldn’t just act as a coward ... luckily, they didn’t seem to be expecting that. “First of all, Grandmaster, let me apologize for the inconvenience,” he had said as he passed a pouch to me. Curious, I opened it, only to find some very precious crafting material.

If their magical signature was accurate, they belonged to Class Twenty-Five beasts.

“Certainly enough to justify some discomfort,” I said as I leaned back slightly, making a show of being impressed. With my magical prowess, finding and hunting such beasts wasn’t a trouble, but for a mere Grandmaster blacksmith, it was an incredible gift. “Now, tell me what you want.”

“Your reputation for directness is not unfounded, Grandmaster,” he said with a chuckle. I shrugged.

“I’m too busy with my business already without all this pointless royal politics, especially between different princes,” I said, the slight tightening in his eyes confirming that my guess was accurate.

They were working for one of the other princes.

“And, how happy are you to gain the support of the fourth prince,” he asked.

“Support, what support?” I said with a chuckle, dismissive. “I have dealt with enough nobles to know that he wouldn’t care about me the slightest if he didn’t need me.”

“And, what does he need you for,” the spy tested me, but I just raised my eyebrow in amusement. “We’ll make sure to suitably reward you, of course.”

“And, treating me as an idiot is not a good start,” I said. “You should be already aware of what he asked me for. Otherwise, you wouldn’t have revealed yourself in that way.”

The spy was surprised at my bluntness. “You’re more aware of the political landscape than you show,” the spy suggested.

“No, it’s just not as complicated as you all seem to. That bunch of useless nobles is no different than a bunch of blacksmiths that received their business from their fathers, trying to jockey around,” I explained, deliberately giving a cynical yet accurate analysis.

Ironically, I couldn’t just brainwash a spy ... well, I could, but it wouldn’t be effective. Their handler would easily notice the sudden discrepancy in their behavior. Unlike them, a Prince had the right to be stupid and willful, allowing such behavior to slip under notice — especially since the plans were halfway reasonable.

Instead, I needed to show myself as a capable partner.

It worked, as the spy activated a silencing ward around us, even keeping the others silent. “And, are you willing to help the prince repair that mysterious weapon,” the spy asked me directly.

“Fuck no,” I answered, and the spy looked surprised.

“That’s a more dedicated response than I had been expecting,” the spy said.

“Do I look like a moron? He’s asking my help to repair some kind of mysterious weapon that he believes to be completely secret. Unless the royal family suddenly lost all of their resources, there should be some blacksmiths at least half as good as me,” I explained, not neglecting to brag about my abilities.

It was not a bad idea to give the impression that I could be easily manipulated by my professional pride.

“But you still accepted,” he countered.

“Well, it’s because he’s using tens of thousands of weapons from me to be distributed all along the Empire, and the more he distributes it, the harder it would be for me to just disappear. Once it’s finally time to repair, I’m just going to reject the offer,” I explained, giving him my

'plan'.

Naturally, I didn't need to see his mocking smirk to know it was a stupid idea. If a prince was angered personally, no amount of reputation would save an ordinary blacksmith from death ... either officially, or through assassination.

"And what if we give you a different offer," the spy suggested. "A better one."

"Naturally, I will be interested," I said. "Naturally, the price has to match the job."

"We want you to take the job to repair the weapon, but instead steal it for us. Don't worry, we'll send reinforcements to make sure you can get away safely."

"Interesting offer, but I need to make sure you can't simply get rid of me. First, I want whoever supporting you to order even more weapons from me, and distribute them all around the Empire, and each weapon has to carry my mark."

"Acceptable," the spy said. "But the fourth prince will not be delayed for long."

For a moment, I thought about talking about the plan to expand Silver Spires and how the other princes should steal his thunder ... but after some consideration, I decided against it. It was not something a blacksmith should be caring for. "That's your job as a spy," I said. "I'll do my job, and you do yours. Just be aware that, I won't accept repairing that weapon unless my reputation is spread across the Empire."

"You drive a hard bargain," the spy countered, acting like I had received a big concession from them.

In actuality, I did not. After all, distributing thousands of high-quality weapons to their key supporters in a visible manner was not exactly something harmful.

"I'm guessing that's all. I'll be waiting for your order from official channels. And, don't forget to supply me with enough materials as well, as the guild is already being annoying."

The spy just chuckled as he pulled back, and the carriage started moving once more. They still had to explain the death of the two bodyguards, but it was their problem. I said nothing else as they escorted me back to my base.

The moment I arrived, I gathered all my newly hired apprentices and started forging, making a show of rapidly finishing a huge number of short swords with the help of my new apprentices.

At the huge forge I had built, twenty forging apprentices were responsible for continuously melting the metal, while on the other side, thirty of them were responsible for putting the finishing touches.

And, in the middle, I was able to quickly forge every piece of hot metal they had prepared into short swords, each slam of my hammer infusing the monster parts into metal in a very specific way — and at the same time, hiding the short yet intense burst of mana I infused.

At the same time, I was planning exactly how to spread the gossip about the fourth prince's genius idea of turning Silver Spire into a school for peasants and expanding it significantly. Naturally, disguised as spies of various forces.

Hopefully, the combination would be enough to make contact.

All that remained was to show patience.

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33280}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Nine

“Another batch is complete, apprentice. Prepare for the next set,” I ordered as I grabbed my hammer tighter, ready to forge another batch of weapons...

A routine that had been going on for almost a month at this point. Since the meeting with the fourth prince, followed by the spies of another prince — the second prince, but disguised as the spies of the crown prince — I had been busy.

Mostly with my forging. My weapons spread around the Empire, delivered to every border. Both the fourth prince and the crown prince — hence the disguised spies — each ordered almost fifty thousand sets of weapons. Up to this date, I barely completed about ten thousand of them.

Well, officially.

I had another surprise. I created another workshop under the first, one that was hidden below the capital, filled with enough wards to keep it hidden ... to the point that I used some of our valuable darkness mana sources to ensure its safety, isolating it from the System.

Of course, ordinarily, there was a reason that people didn't use completely independent magical wards to create weapons. Every monster part was unique, requiring the judgment of the blacksmith to perfectly meld into the structure of the weapon. It was impossible to attain uniformity, therefore impossible to rely on the wards to automatize anything...

Except for replacing monster parts with pure mana.

Naturally, I wasn't the only one who came up with such an idea, but considering even the most ordinary enhanced weapon required hundreds of mana to properly forge that way, no mage was really crazy enough to do so when their mana took almost a day to replenish.

For me, converting hundreds of thousands of mana points was a trivial achievement, allowing me to produce more than ten times the weapon I had forged. Then, using various disguises, I made sure that they were distributed across the Empire. Some, I added to the royal deliveries but manipulated the delivery orders to keep that knowledge from reaching the upper echelons. Some were sold into the black market by 'enterprising thieves'.

Some, I even allowed them to be discovered by various villages and towns in hard-to-reach areas, in the form of a ruined caravan after a monster attack that I personally arranged after

destroying it repeatedly.

All of those measures ensured that the weapons were distributed at each corner of the world...

At the same time, the transformation of Silver Spires was going on with excellent speed. With both princes competing to steal the credit for that incredible achievement, tens of thousands of mages without noble blood were transferred to the place, most already at their level limit.

Of course, the process was not smooth, and many noble students left the school in protest, but that was hardly a problem. Helga confirmed that the ordinary students with their level limit were far more enthusiastic about learning, determined to squeeze even the smallest advantage from the situation.

Increasing Helga's Knowledge Spark collection significantly. And, even for me, the rewards were not exactly negligible. I collected quite a bit of Purified Spark, enough to have a healthy reserve.

Of course, the most important advantage was her domain. As her domain got stronger and stronger, so did her power ... and so did the multiplier effect on my Intelligence stat.

[Intelligence: 51]

It wasn't at the point of matching my Endurance, but every progress counted.

However, while I was thinking about those things, another apprentice just joined. "What's going on?" I asked.

"A-a messenger from the fourth prince arrived. He says it's urgent."

"Very well," I said with a sigh, put my hammer into my tool belt, and walked out. A messenger without a warning only signaled one thing. The prince was getting impatient.

Pity. I wanted to make contact with Oeyne before I had to face such an important confrontation, but it didn't matter. "Tell every apprentice to stay inside the base. I'm not responsible for the safety of anyone who leaves the workshop while I am away," I said.

I had already reinforced the wards enough to handle anything but an explicit military siege just in case, with some interesting self-destruction mechanisms to handle extreme emergencies. But those measures would only protect the people who trusted my warning and stayed inside.

Hopefully, they would listen.

I walked into the courtyard, and found the messenger standing rather than taking a seat. Another display of patience. “Grandmaster. My Prince is asking for your presence in strongest terms,” he said.

His rudeness would have been enough for me to run away if I wasn’t confident in my abilities. “Alright, let’s go and handle this repair job,” I said, watching the messenger tense.

He was clearly aware of the nature of the task. Interesting.

Yet, he didn’t even conceal the hint of annoyance on his face as he stepped into the carriage, gesturing me to follow. I stepped inside, acting like I didn’t notice two dozen guards following us from a distance.

Or the fact that some of those guards actually belonged to the guilds rather than the royal family.

I ignored that, because the location of the spear was an impossible clue ... that, and the existence of two parties was a boon for me. If I dealt with them and disappeared, they would be blaming each other first before digging into the issue.

I acted obedient even as the carriage left the capital, and almost a hundred guards joined the mix. Clearly, after the previous — fake — attack, the fourth prince wasn’t taking any chances.

Too bad his forces were already filled with enough spies to make that unnecessary. Clearly, those spies weren’t in his inner circle, or they wouldn’t need my help to steal the spear.

I wondered exactly what they had planned for me.

I said nothing much, staying silent as the carriage moved. A long while later, we arrived at a cave entrance. “Please, this way,” the servant said as he led me inside, four guards accompanying us visibly, while four others were hidden behind a magical field, hidden from ordinary view.

Further confirming that they were planning something.

I followed them even as they led me to a prison.

Not literally, of course. No, it was a nice room, furnished expensively enough that it wouldn’t be amiss in the royal palace. Yet, the opulence didn’t matter when contrasted by the sudden weight of the wards I could feel on top of me, restraining my physical strength.

In a very obvious manner.

“W-what’s going on!” I shouted in mock panic. The door opened, but there was a glimmering barrier remained.

It was the same servant that escorted me. “Please wait patiently, Grandmaster. Someone important will attend to you soon. Meanwhile, please enjoy our hospitality. He gestured to the table, which was piled with some of the most expensive food I had ever seen, no doubt made by the royal chiefs.

Aware that I was still being watched, I first looked angry, even trying to flip a chair, only to be prevented by a jolt of energy. It didn’t even hurt with my Endurance, but I acted like it was painful.

I made a show of raging for twenty minutes before calming down, and stumbled toward a large pitcher of chilled wine, enjoying a great deal. A predictable response from someone without magic trapped in a cage they couldn’t resist.

Too predictable, even, but I trusted my acting skills to sell it.

Interestingly, I had no idea exactly why they imprisoned me. I expected that, but at least I expected them to show me the spear and see whether I could repair it before locking me down. Yet, they just imprisoned me the moment I arrived, and did it decisively.

Fascinating.

I made a show of drinking and getting slightly drunk, as the magically reinforced alcohol was enough to make someone with about fifteen Endurance drunk. By acting tipsy, I was signaling that it was around twenty.

“I can’t believe it,” I raged several times, but stayed tipsy. I could already feel the presence of people at the other side of the door, and I wanted to have a talk.

When the door opened, I turned toward it with a blaring gaze ... only to actually feel surprised. “Oh, I feel honored. The guild sent its strongest dogs to attack me,” I said as I looked at the two warriors, and ignored the old man behind them. “It’s a pity you’re cowardly enough to need a ward to do your work.”

The old man, was one of the two legendary blacksmiths in the capital, and the only one that worked for the guild. Naturally, the guild had other legendary blacksmiths, but others were not

in the capital.

“Oh, Legendary Blacksmith Hetra,” the old man intervened with a chuckle, using my name, but my title was rather surprising. Clearly, he was convinced that I was hiding my capabilities. After some consideration, I decided to play along.

“H-how do you know that?” I gasped.

“Please, do you really think a mere grandmaster could provide the exquisite weapons you seemed to create in seconds? Not to mention, the courage to challenge the guild in one of our home fields. Only Legendary Blacksmith could have the courage.”

“What do you want?” I asked.

“Well,” he said, his smile smug. “That’s the question, isn’t it?”

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 54

Endurance: 72 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 56280}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred

I considered saying nothing for a moment, letting the man revel in his smugness. Unfortunately, that would show him that all the production he had gone through to impress me had been for nothing. And, if he realized that, he might not reveal why he had gone through all that trouble.

Of course, I couldn't just start begging for forgiveness or do something equally absurd. After all, I was supposed to be a brave soul that challenged the guild directly. "It seems that I should have joined the guild," I said, acting like I was using my anger to cover up my fear. "That way, I might have learned how to be a coward like you."

My insult was enough to create a flicker of frustration on his face. It wasn't a particularly well-crafted one, but coming from someone that he saw close to his skill, it clearly had an impact.

He suppressed it with all the smoothness of a politician, and smiled instead. "Oh, the fire of youth," he said dismissively instead. "As you grow old, you'll learn that not every problem needs to be faced head-on." He paused, his smirk sharpening. "Well, if you grow old..."

"Impressive, I would have thought that you would have at least finished explaining whatever amazing offer you had before resorting to the threats," I said, leaning forward as if I wanted to turn that into a physical confrontation.

"You're brave," he commented. "Too bad you don't have the necessary caution to temper it."

This time, I gave a mocking laugh. "What's the point of reaching the peak of what's possible if I'm going to act cautious all the time. I rather die."

That earned a patronizing shake of his head. "Oh, poor child. You think that you're at the top of the world just because you leveled up somewhere near level thirty and earned a few achievements on your own. You don't know just how many secrets the world truly holds. We're just at the beginning. You're weak."

"What nonsense are you talking about, you crazy old man," I said, acting shocked. "Do you want me to believe that there are others that could treat me like a weakling? Have you been using drugs? Why would the world be such a hellhole if there were people that are much stronger than us..."

He sighed in defeat. "That's the question, isn't it," he answered, his sigh of frustration real as far as I could see. "For some reason, they don't intervene even as the monsters massacre

people, only intervening when things get too much...”

As I listened to him, I became convinced that his knowledge about the Eternals was quite limited. It was good, as it meant they wouldn’t be alerted if I had to take a sudden emergency action.

“Let’s assume for a moment that what you’re saying is correct, and you’re not getting mad in your advanced age,” I said, not missing the opportunity to get in another insult. “Does it have anything to do with this cowardly trap,” I added.

“Somewhat, but it’s mostly your fault,” he answered, his smirk widening. “This facility holds the key to making contact with that mysterious organization. It was the greatest opportunity of your life when the fourth prince reached for you to repair it ... but you chose to waste that opportunity by trying to betray him for the crown prince.”

“And, let me guess, he reached out to you,” I said, implicitly accepting that claim. I had no doubt that the only reason they had learned was because the second prince’s spies deliberately let it known. The fourth prince’s spies — the ones that were actually loyal to him — were nowhere good enough to catch it otherwise.

They clearly wanted to make sure I couldn’t just work for the fourth prince, and had to follow up with the plan of stealing the Spear.

“I have to thank you for that. The prince clearly has concerns about trusting any guild member with such a secret. Without your betrayal, he wouldn’t have contact with me.”

“Good for you, but why all the trouble,” I said, making a sweeping gesture as I spoke. “Why bother explaining all to me when you could just go and repair your precious weapon ...” I continued, then I made a show of freezing. Shocked at first, soon turning into amusement. “But you can’t repair it alone, can you?” I said.

“T-that’s nonsense,” he immediately responded, but he was unable to suppress his shock. That was understandable. He no doubt didn’t expect to be caught due to the blunt personality I had been reflecting.

“Oh, really, then why are you here if you’re not trying to offer me a deal I can’t refuse. I help you, and you convince the prince to let me go free. Right?”

His silence was deafening as he tried to decide what to say, his preparations ruined. He could argue against my conclusion, but it would be pointless when he would eventually circle toward

it. “And, you think that you’re capable enough to offer me something that I can’t find in the guild.”

I leaned back even further, enjoying his growing frustration. “I certainly can. I’m much better than the bunch of lazy pathetic apprentices that you constantly fill into the guild,” I declared.

“Pretty arrogant of you,” he cut in, clearly desperate to change the topic.

“Maybe. It’s not arrogance if I can back it up,” I declared. He looked happy with that change, so I decided to douse his excitement once more. “It’s not like it matters,” I added.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, you clearly don’t think that I’m not as good as your fellow legendary blacksmiths, but still went all that trouble of capturing me.” My smirk turned merciless. “Your fellows don’t know about the opportunity, do they?”

He paused, his arrogance long gone. He stayed silent for almost a minute before speaking. “I see, you’re not as politically unaware as you led us to believe,” he said.

“No, I’m not. I just prefer not to waste pointless flowery language and lengthy yet pointless intrigues.”

“Even when it costs you a lot,” he said. “Things would have been much more different if you tried to ramp up your operations slowly—“

“Well, that’s debatable,” I cut in. “Discounting this nonsense that I couldn’t have foreseen, it wasn’t a bad plan. No matter how I tried to enter, the guild would have tried to cut my path eventually. At least, in my way, I would have gathered enough supporters to make the guild’s job harder.”

“Thinking like this, it’s not too unreasonable,” he admitted. “And, since you’re more scheming than you revealed, why don’t you show me exactly how good are you and guess why I need you,” he asked.

“Come on, that’s the best you can come up with,” I said. “My techniques are designed to create weapons that could be easily enchanted. And only an expert on the topic could create such simplified designs. Ergo, you’re having trouble repairing something about its magical structure,” I suggested.

“Not bad, not bad at all,” he answered. “And does such an offer look acceptable to you?” he asked.

“Depends,” I said.

“Depends on what?”

“On what you’re willing to offer, of course,” I added. “I want some evidence about this mysterious organization before even checking the weapon, and I want to meet a representative before I start working.”

“You can only meet with them once the repair is finished, but otherwise acceptable,” he accepted quickly. “Although, I had to admit, I expected you to resist much harder after the betrayal.”

Good point. Luckily, I had an answer ready to go. “Betrayal is unacceptable, of course, but you were my enemy until a few moments ago. How can we talk about betrayal when there was no allegiance.” I paused for a moment, taking a threatening breath. “Of course, if you were to pull something like this now...”

“Message received,” he answered with a chuckle. “Provided you can prove your worth, of course,” he said as he pushed some papers toward me.

Some very familiar papers, created by my own hand, showing some of the progress notes I had prepared when I had been working on the Spear. I didn’t have any doubt about the source of that mysterious repair job, but it was always good to have confirmation.

“Wow, that’s an interesting weapon,” I said, making a show of my shocked display. “Is this real, or is it just a complicated test?” I asked.

“Good question. Why don’t you tell me,” he said, looking happy now that he had achieved his mission without a problem. Of course, he was unaware that he was just another pawn. I had no doubt that the second prince’s agents were doing their own preparations to contact me, about to deliver their own incredible offer.

Patience, I thought. After all, I had already received everything I needed from the current situation. After I finished my notes, I pushed them back, and his eyes widened.

“Not bad, not bad at all,” he murmured, clearly impressed by my display even as I undersold my capabilities greatly.

I passed the test.

All that remained was to decide whether to use the opportunity to make contact with the Eternals. I was always afraid of targeting them directly ... but what if they were the ones to recruit me...

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 54

Endurance: 72 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 56280}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred One

“How’s being a prisoner going,” Helga asked the moment I teleported back to our little hidden spot, once again bringing a dozen prospective candidates with me for Helga’s special classes.

“Not bad,” I answered with a chuckle.

It was the third day of my imprisonment, and they were yet to allow me to come into contact with the Spear, still trying to come to a decision about my loyalty.

Naturally, it took me about fifteen minutes after the guild blacksmith had left to take control of the whole wing teleport back, using another disguise I prepared to pose as my own assistant back in my forge, making sure recruiting efforts were going well despite the production slowing down.

It wasn’t like I was short of money.

I teleported back to Silver Spires to bring the best candidates, finally pushing the number of private students Helga had over a hundred.

Of course, based on my request, she only interacted with them through a very complicated and awe-inspiring illusion, introducing herself as the spirit of knowledge. The sense of wonderment that awakened helped the Divine Spark generation quite a bit.

“How about the —“ she started, but I silenced her ... rather directly, with a searing kiss.

“No talking. It’s time for my conjugal visit,” I said after I pulled back.

“Really, before we even give you a show of my newest discovery,” she said. I was about to say yes, but then I stopped, recognizing the naughty way her lips curled.

For a moment, I said nothing, examining her. Her beauty was as striking as always with her beautiful blonde hair spilling to her shoulders, and her robe hugging her body. Yet, it was her smile that grabbed my attention. Beautiful as always ... but with a naughty, playful curl that was normally absent.

She was getting even sexier.

And wasn’t that a was a scary thought?

Good kind of scary.

“Alright, tell me,” I said as I decided to surrender, not having in my heart to ruin her little ploy.

She said nothing, but waved her hand. Immediately, a complicated illusion appeared, representing the single most complicated magical artifact I had ever seen, impossible to discern where the magic ended and the material aspects began.

Even with my intelligence, I was barely able to decipher its function after examining it for a while ... and only because its ultimate function was simple.

“A beacon,” I gasped. “One that can be detected accurately through primordial aether.”

“It’s just a prototype, and I’m not sure how long it could resist the emptiness of the Primordial Aether ... but yes, a beacon,” she said, with no problem of counting the negative aspects. She was proud.

As she should be. What she designed was no joke, even if it was impossible to build in its current form — the forging requirements were significantly above my capabilities, and flat-out impossible in several locations.

In comparison, purely magical aspects were masterful, perfect as far as I could see, with several methods showing it in a way that I hadn’t thought to be possible. “What does this ward here do?” I asked.

“Ah, it’s simple. It’s there to solve the core mismatch between the ...” she started, giving me a lengthy explanation, one that I barely understood despite my Intelligence stat.

Admittedly, she didn’t make my job any easier by the way she positioned herself. She stood next to me, with her hand sneaking down, dragging her palm over my erection, my pants proving to be a poor insulator against her divine fingers. I stopped listening and started enjoying her touch.

“Focus. Do you want me to explain twice,” she said the moment my attention started to wander, before I could even give an outward sign. Yet, from the way her smile widened, it was clear that she was confident in her assessment.

“Your power?” I asked.

“The position of the Goddess of Knowledge has some interesting benefits,” she said. “Including how to catch wayward students,” she added, squeezing my shaft slightly.

“Inconvenient,” I pouted, and her smile turned even more vicious. “I’ll pay attention,” I immediately corrected, happy to play along by giving an exaggerated display of obedience.

She certainly deserved me playing along with her fantasies.

I kept my attention on the glowing magical display that zoomed in and out repeatedly as she explained how every single part worked. Some parts displayed how the fundamentals worked, while the others showed some magical rules and principles that I didn’t even know existed.

She was using her new strength as a goddess very efficiently.

I enjoyed the lecture on magic ... even if her fingers were making it very difficult to focus. It was difficult enough when she was caressing from outside, but it turned even more difficult once she pushed my pants down.

“Is this appropriate behavior, professor,” I teased her.

“Of course. You can’t listen to the class with your pants feeling tight and uncomfortable,” she answered readily. True, but that didn’t make her naked touch any less distracting.

She was playing for the keeps.

The explanation lasted almost an hour ... and even then, it could only be described as an introduction. “Now, show me how well you understood it by upgrading the design of the physical parts,” she ordered.

What she asked of me was not a simple task. The pressure from the complicated wards alone was enough to destabilize most of the ordinary metals, which was challenging enough. Then, there was the aspect of building a correct and stable structure. Then, it had to be able to hold the mana for long, resist the erosion of the Primordial Aether at least partially ... as well as some other interesting features.

Even a prototype was difficult to truly design.

Still, I started working, doing my best to improve.

Then, Helga chose to complicate matters seven further by falling down on her knees and her lips wrapped around the head of my shaft, making the challenge even more difficult. Her soft fingers stayed wrapped around the base, pumping up and down steadily

I didn’t bother to keep down my moan. “Focus,” she admonished, pulling back just enough to

deliver her warning before she sank down again, this time going deeper.

I followed her request and suppressed my moans, enjoying her steady effort. Jolts of pleasure spread through my body as she started to apply a very complicated pattern of movement.

“It looks like your Domain of Knowledge is not limited to magical knowledge,” I mocked her, learning a playful pinch.

“I told you to focus,” she warned, but she was unable to prevent the blush from spreading on her face. For all her efforts to look like she was an expert on maintaining control, she was still my shy bookworm at heart.

Anyone else trying to order me around would have earned a playful punishment at best. But Helga was different.

She earned the privilege of a delayed punishment.

I worked on my task carefully, maintaining a fragile balance between work and pleasure. It was a challenge to do so with the wetness spreading around my girth, attacking the fragile balance I had built.

I continued to take many magical notes, but my speed of writing slowed down once she took me into her mouth fully, moving back and forth at an incredible pace.

I squeezed my eyes shut, trying to process the sudden rush of pleasure without moaning.

I failed, spectacularly.

“I expect my students to be more attentive,” she said ... without even stopping her treatment, using magic to vocalize it while her mouth was busy. She bobbed her head, her pace changing. Sometimes, she moved back and forth aggressively, sometimes, she bobbed slowly as she savored the taste.

Making my job harder and harder, grunts turning into a long string of moans as she worked on my shaft.

Time slowed down, and I suffered a delicious torture as I tried to put the finishing touches on the schematic.

However, as we climbed toward the peak of the pleasure, our bodies weren't the only thing that was reacting. My mana danced in her automatically as it was my habit, helping her to process

the new Divine Spark she had collected.

That spark started to float once I helped her to completely bond with the environment, solidifying her domain further.

And, giving me a beautiful reward in the process.

[+7 Intelligence]

It was interesting just how little the size of the Domain mattered as far as my benefits went. Just in a few weeks, Helga was able to catch up with Seldanna, who had thousands of times more Divine Spark to rely on along with the memories of an old god.

Yet, Helga almost managed to catch up with her initial stage. Well, at least in terms of supporting my power.

In other aspects, like actually allowing her to resist an invasion, her tiny domain wouldn't be particularly useful. Not that it mattered.

I was there to defend her.

With the significant boost of intelligence I had just received, working on the plans of the beacon got easier. The higher processing speed allowed me to make some interesting calculations that I was unable to complete earlier, and soon, the first set of changes was complete.

Of course, the beacon was nowhere near complete ... but it was progress nonetheless.

"Good work," Helga said and grabbed my legs while she took a deep breath. "Now, it's time for your reward." With that, she leaned forward, her blonde hair spilling down to hide her face as she mercilessly deep-throated me....

And, soon, I reached a limit, filling her mouth. She pulled back once she managed to catch every little bit of my seed, swallowing with gusto.

"It's a pity you have to return to prison," she chuckled as she waved her hand, and teleported away, teasing me.

Cheeky girl, I thought with a smile, and teleported back to my prison rather than following her.

I could punish her during our next meeting...

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 61

Endurance: 72 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 58410}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Two

On the sixth day of my — extremely unsuccessful — imprisonment, the men of the second prince finally made a move. They were patient ... a bit too much, even, as it was two days since I agreed to the offer of the guild leader and started working on repairing the spear.

Well, to be more accurate, I was looking like I was trying to repair. With my full abilities and previous experience, it would take minutes for me to properly repair it, and a few days to improve the design significantly.

Storing Divine Spark was kind of my expertise at this point.

The spy approached me just as I walked out to a garden, enjoying the grass under my feet — an arrangement to reward me for my cooperation. He was wearing a black and gray uniform, dressed as a guard without a rank.

“We meet again,” he said.

“Yes, and I can’t say that I’m happy with it,” I answered, looking dissatisfied. “You were supposed to be here when I arrived to help me, but instead, I ended up imprisoned. I can’t say I’m happy with the cooperation abilities of the crown prince.”

“Oh, I can just go and leave you to the mercy of the fourth prince if that’s what you wish,” he said, threatening me directly.

Ordinarily, it was not an attitude I would appreciate. However, his smugness was more promising than annoying. Such a confrontational attitude implied that they were feeling the pressure. “Wait,” I said, pushing an appropriate amount of panic to my tone. “Just because you failed once doesn’t mean I want to kick you out.”

“As you wish,” he said, nodding with a slight smile, avoiding to mention my sharp twist. “We are ready to act if you’re ready to act.”

“When?” I asked.

“Whenever you think you can bring us the spear. We couldn’t enter the inner sanctum, but we managed to take control of the perimeter defenses. We can use the opportunity to get away the moment you’re ready.”

I nodded. “Tonight,” I said with a determined tone. “I’m bored of being a prisoner, and I want to

escape.”

“Are you sure you can take the spear,” he said. “What if they notice the absence of the spear before you can leave the inner sanctum. You wouldn’t want to anger the crown prince with such a great mistake.”

“Don’t worry, I already forgot a replica,” I said as I reached into my pocket and passed a spearhead to him. “I just need to craft a broken handle and switch it. They are not even searching for me.”

He looked suspicious. “How did you manage to forge it. I doubt they have given you a personal forge.”

“Of course not. I just said that I needed to forge a copy of the weapon several times in order to get a better sense of its construction. Stealing one of the copies while melting the rest was easy.”

“Not bad,” the spy said. “Too bad you don’t have appropriate skills. You would have made an incredible work partner.”

I shrugged. “I’m glad with my skills. I don’t want to be a snake,” I said, delivering one last insult as he walked away. Ordinarily, I wouldn’t have done so, as angering the people I was supposed to be relying on.

Luckily, I had no intention of cooperating with them. Not because of what I suspected to be their intentional information leakage that removed any possibility of working together with the fourth prince. That was easy to ignore, as betrayal from the people I didn’t trust in the first place was meaningless.

No, I wanted to get rid of him to look more committed to the path the guild leader had created for me.

So, as I went back to the forging room, I found him. “I just had a little birdie that came to me with an offer,” I said. “My freedom, in exchange for the spear.”

“That’s interesting,” he said as he glanced at me, raising his head from the repair plans he had been examining. They were mostly drawn by me, and I made sure to keep those plans workable, but ultimately too complex to be really practical, with several weaknesses.

It might be something I could create easily, but no need to empower my enemies any more

than necessary.

“Interesting how?” I asked.

“Well, it’s an opportunity to get free. I thought that you would take it rather than trust our offer.”

I shrugged. “It’s not that I trust you, but I trust a bunch of spies with a very convenient offer even less. Add in the high chance of failure,” I added, letting my words linger.

He tossed his head back and laughed. “And, what do you have planned.”

“I plan nothing,” I said as I pulled a spearhead from my pocket. “Just find an agent to disguise as me and pass it to them, use their movements to clean their operation. I’ll be in the forge, where it’s safe.”

“And how do you know whether this place is safe?” he asked.

“If it wasn’t, they wouldn’t have bothered with me and would have stolen the spear directly,” I said. It was not as simple as I implied, but it was still logical enough to avoid suspicion. “Now, do you want to continue working, or do you want to chat,” I said as I returned to work.

He took a step back, surprised at my outburst. For a moment, he stood still uncertain of how to reply. “It’s good to see you so enthusiastic about it,” he said.

“Of course. I think we can finish it in a few days if we work hard. Maybe even tonight if can come up with a breakthrough. I don’t have time to waste with political nonsense,” I said, once again relying on the supposed passion of a legendary blacksmith.

He stared at me for a while before he shook his head, no doubt underestimating me even further after my ‘simple’ explanation. “I just need to arrange the plan,” he said as he walked away, leaving me alone.

I acted like I was focused on my work, even as I subtly cast several spells, preparing for the next stage. I wanted to use the upcoming battle to expand my control over the wards. Admittedly, it was not one of the main reasons for the plan, but just a side benefit.

Mostly because I couldn’t plan for it. Most of the places were not like my prison cell, with little active supervision. The other locations had several mages constantly maintaining the wards, making infiltration a troubling challenge.

This was particularly true for the forging room.

I hoped the upcoming battle created enough commotion to allow me to sneak inside. The spy looked desperate enough ... and if he failed, it was not exactly a problem either.

The guild leader returned not too long after, and we started working. Soon, I grabbed several monster parts, and started forging them into one big entity. "... I don't think it'll work like this. You'll overload the nodes," he said.

"Trust me," I answered as I continued to slam my hammer. He was used to my sudden bouts of inspiration, so he let that slide, unaware the only reason I was going through a dangerous explosive process was to fill the room with excess mana.

Preparing for the commotion.

With my mana in place, even if the battle was less damaging than I predicted, I should be able to make some progress.

I lost myself in my pretend work, working more and more fervor, looking lost in my beats ... and soon, a sudden flicker hit the wards.

The battle started. I used the mana I had already spread into the room into the ward, using the lack of attention from the mages responsible for the operation. Their attention had turned to the perimeter, while I slowly sneaked into the core of the wards, slowly adding my own layers to the structure, betting on the fact that they were not created by the others.

It was a challenging affair ... until the spies of the second prince surprised me by triggering several explosions throughout the facility. Mostly outer structure, but enough to earn the focus of the other mages almost immediately.

And, as a result, their attention slipped. Not one to miss such opportunities, I let my mana spread, infecting the wards like a particularly aggressive disease. With that, I had the keys to the defense. I didn't use them other than watching the agents of the second prince being mowed down like grass, helpless to resist.

It was fun to watch my enemies being killed by my other enemies. It was efficient.

I ignored that as I continued forging. With the wards under my control, there was no point in delaying the work. Toward midnight, I slammed my hammer on the spear for one last time. "Finally complete," I said as I pulled back.

“Fascinating,” the guild leader said, his greed almost physical as he wrapped his hands around the broken handle. At that moment, his greed-fueled his jealousy further, and in real-time, I could see him coming to a decision.

He just didn’t give that order immediately. “Amazing work,” he said. “You should go rest. We have a week to prepare before the representative from that mysterious organization arrives.”

“Of course,” I said, using my apparent exhaustion as a reason to miss the obviousness of his lie.

Yet, even as the guards escorted me to my room, I continued observing him through the wards. He was rather purposeful as he dashed away.

I wondered exactly what he was planning to do with that spear.

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{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 62

Endurance: 73 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 58410}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Three

To my surprise, the guild leader didn't stay at the outpost.

Instead, he went to the vault, and placed the spear into the vault. No, not the spear, I corrected myself as I used the vault wards to check the integrity of the weapon, and realized that it was a replica.

Amusingly, it was the same replica I had used to trick the spies of the second prince. An amusing trickery, but it didn't answer why he was in such a hurry. Especially since he disguised himself as a guard once he went to his room before leaving the complex.

Interesting.

Luckily, my luxurious cell might as well be a private palace at this point, as I teleported away easily without alerting any of the guards, and started following them.

The guild leader, disguised as one of the guards, left the complex in a great hurry, escorted only by two others. And, to my surprise, he met with another spy, accompanying him into another hidden location near the capital.

This new hidden location was defended even stronger than the previous location. For a moment, I thought that I wouldn't be able to sneak inside ... but a slight examination changed my mind. It was easy to slip in ... because most of the wards were actually targeted inward.

They were trying to keep someone prisoner. Someone strong, it seemed. Most of the wards were actually dedicated to internal defenses, and the rest were dedicated to keeping the location secret. It might even be useful ... if a very excited guild leader didn't lead me directly there.

I had some suspicions about who might be inside the place, a suspicion that was enough to anger me, but I didn't explode. I needed to make sure first.

The misaligned defenses didn't even slow me down as I entered the complex, quickly disguising myself as a servant to follow my target closely. He entered a room, and I stayed outside, using magic to eavesdrop.

"The spear is here, my prince," he said as he knelt. I wasn't able to see them, but the way his knee hit the ground was rather distinct. "You can use it to steal some of her Divine Essence and use it to bargain with the Eternals. I'm sure they will be happy to accept such an exalted person

as a part of them. And, with their help, your ascension will be guaranteed.”

“Oh, interesting,” the prince said. “You seem to be rather enthusiastic about giving such an opportunity to me. I would have expected you to take it for yourself,” he said. “It’s not exactly something I expected from one of the leaders of the guild. Your organization had always been rather protective about your independence.”

“Not at all, my prince. You’re the next in line to the throne, and you have the necessary vision to finally stop the constant collapse of the Empire. The support of the Eternals is just insurance.”

I had to admit, I was impressed. The words of the guild leader implied that he was the crown prince.

Meaning, he managed to trick both the second and the fourth prince in the process of their operation and ended up with the spear.

“Good, and I’m sure that, as the next Emperor, I couldn’t leave anyone that knows about such an important secret,” he said.

“Wait—“ the guild leader gasped, shocked, but that was all he was able to say before the prince activated the wards he had arranged beforehand. Similar to my initial imprisonment, but actually used to deliver a hit without a warning rather than used as a threat.

His sole words turned into wordless cries. His level was high, and as a blacksmith, his physical stats were nothing to scoff at. The combination resulted in a high HP ... unfortunately, that only extended his suffering.

It took a minute for him to end up dead. At a distance, his guards experienced the exact same end.

I made no motion to save them, just used the opportunity to hide better.

“Are you sure that was wise, my prince? What if the spear he brought is fake?”

“Doesn’t matter. If it’s fake, the real one has to be hidden in the other hideout. There’s no chance that he changed it halfway. He wouldn’t be stupid enough to trust such a treasure to another guild member. If it’s fake, it would be in the hidden base of my brother, and we will just use our forces to raid.” He took a deep breath. “Not exactly what I prefer. It would mean revealing my hand, but better than the alternative.”

“What about the Emperor. What if he decides that it violates the limits he had set.”

“Doesn’t matter. My father is a dead man walking. He barely had weeks remaining. And, he won’t take such a risk close to the ultimate date. Certainly not to protect my most useless brother. Just make sure that he’s nowhere near the hidden base while you launch the assault.”

“Hopefully, it won’t be necessary, my prince,” he said.

“Hopefully,” the crown prince answered. Soon, the door opened and he entered to the corridor, giving me the first glimpse of him. He was tall and broad-shouldered, creating an imposing sight. Wearing armor and a crown, he made an imposing sight.

Charismatic and competent, he made an imposing sight. He would make a good emperor ... assuming that this facility was not built to host one of the few people I really cared about.

If that’s the case, I doubted that he would enjoy a long reign — or even last until the demise of his father.

Sneaking into the inner parts of the prison would have been challenging if the prince hadn’t removed every detection ward in place. Hidden behind an illusion, I followed him. Illusions were hardly foolproof, but luckily, the prince felt no need to check his surroundings.

Of course, I wasn’t exactly betting my life on the prince’s carelessness. Unlike the guild leader who had just met with his demise, I wasn’t lacking in magical abilities. I could take down the whole hidden base if needed.

It wouldn’t be silent, and it would reveal more than I wanted ... but facing the possibility of saving one of my girls, was an acceptable risk.

After we passed another ward, we arrived at a huge location. At the center, there was an unconscious angel.

A familiar face.

Mariel.

My dear headmistress.

However, even as I looked at her, I could see that things were not exactly well. Her wings. Instead of pure white, her wings were filled with a mismatching crisscross of black lines.

Darkness Spark.

Well, it explained where the Darkness Spark that was used to power her unique wards had gone.

My first instinct was to just rush forward and take down the prince and save her. However, I held back. It looked bad, but she had managed to resist whatever that was going on for months. Keeping a few more minutes to see what was going on was even easier.

I waited passively, with one exception. I cast a small spell, one that would have struggled to light a candle. However, targeted one of the traps I had built into the spear, breaking one of its vital parts, and turning it into an ornament.

Despite the tenseness of the situation, watching the expression of the prince as he approached Mariel. It started confident, almost smug, but as he stayed close nothing happened, It first melted into surprise, then shame.

“It seems that our partner was craftier than I had given him credit for,” he said as he looked at his loyal retainer, and in his eyes, I could see murder. The retainer kept his eyes down, loyal to a fault.

Our future emperor clearly had a fragile ego.

He stayed silent for a few seconds before giving the order. “Activate our kill teams. I want that base burnt to the ground, and the real spear with me. I need this spear. I can’t give up her without stealing some of her Divine Spark.”

Ironically, I might have saved his life by intervening. Even without examining, I could see that Darkness and Light Sparks were currently on a weird balance on her body, a situation that was only possible due to the opposing nature of those sparks and centuries she had used Darkness Spark to keep her Light Spark in control.

If the crown prince managed to do what he wished and started poking around, it had the chance to destroy the fragile balance of the opposing Sparks.

The prince started walking away. At the same time, I cast an illusion that would take Mariel’s place, adding a few new wards to fake her presence in the many detection wards. With the most important wards temporarily turned down to enable the prince to approach, my job was easier.

Soon, I was out, Mariel with me.

As much as I wanted to return and teach the crown prince a lesson about trying to target my people, Mariel's safety was more important. After wrapping her with a layer of protective mana, I started flying toward the capital.

I had two reasons for not teleporting to Helga's domain. I didn't know how being in another Divine Domain would play with her situation... And I didn't know how teleportation affected her state. Going to a place where I could fly in short order was the logical choice.

The next step, a medical examination... And, if everything was well, playing the doctor game...

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Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Four

I wanted to punish the crown prince for daring to capture my sexy angel. I even have several ways to deliver such punishment. But, as I dug a tunnel underneath the capital — easily bypassing the magical defenses built to prevent such a problem — to bring her to the safehouse I had established for emergencies, unable to teleport due to her dangerous state, I ignored that desire.

At this point, revenge wasn't as important as making sure her problems wouldn't suddenly explode. The prince was not someone that I would have trouble reaching. I could take him down any time.

My focus was on making sure Mariel was safe.

Even as I created a tunnel to allow a secondary access point to my safe house, I did my best to avoid touching Mariel with my mana, afraid of somehow breaking the fragile balance between the Light and Darkness Sparks.

Usually, even the mana of different natures didn't play well together, let alone the Sparks, and I didn't know why Light and Darkness were the exceptions to that.

Not that it was the first time I had noticed that. Mariel had been using their opposing nature to keep her own ill-advised step into Divinity in check, preventing her Light spark from burning her body.

However, I didn't dare to do anything until I could drag her into the center of the base and activate all the wards. Not just the defensive wards, but dozens and dozens of wards, some arcane while others relied mostly on tantric mana.

Designed especially to address the Divine Spark-related problems. After seeing Helga's situation, I expected the others to experience similar problems, and was prepared for the worst.

Well, what I expected to be the worst. It seemed that I had to revise that estimation downward significantly. I used the wards to carefully examine her situation, trying to come up with a diagnosis.

There was good news. Well, one of them.

Against all odds, her situation was stable.

Unfortunately, that was the extent of what could be termed as good news. I had been hoping to just remove Darkness Spark from her, which would leave her only with her Light Spark. Unfortunately, the two Sparks were even more intertwined than I expected — or even thought to be possible.

Worse, the Sparks had already mixed with her body, enough to complete her first step into the Godhood, which took the removal of the Divine Spark from her off the table. Divine Spark was not like a mana, and an external source of power that could be added and removed without consequence.

Divine Spark bonded with the carrier on a fundamental, existential level, requiring a mental alignment while changing the physical parts subtly. It was still possible to reverse it when the bonding process was on the level of Chosen or Demigod, but once the vessel reached Godhood, the issue was far more troubling.

Worse, I didn't even know where the changes made of the Divine Spark started and where Mariel's angel nature ended. After all, she was the only angel I met under non-combat circumstances, and she was already juggling the two opposing Divine Sparks desperately then.

Making a judgment call about it was difficult.

I needed someone to help me brainstorm. After casting a few spells to make sure the base was secure and no one was following me, I teleported to Helga — finding it annoying that teleporting her back was equally impossible due to the way she bonded to her domain.

How frustrating. No wonder gods used avatars often. Unfortunately, the only method we know was too expensive in terms of Divine Spark for Helga to afford — not to mention the disadvantages of using such a method on System space.

“Still, it's a good thing that you have found her, right?” Helga said.

“Certainly better than the alternative,” I answered. “Still, that doesn't solve our problem. Any ideas?”

Helga stopped for a second, her beautiful face creased with a frown. Then, she spoke. “How far are you on forging those beacons,” she said.

I sighed. “So, you have the same idea as me. I was hoping that you would come up with something else.”

“Maybe if you give me two years and unlimited access to literature on Divine Sparks that the Eternals had collected, but without it, I lack the basis to make any kind of progress on the topic,” she explained.

I nodded, understanding where she was coming from. Even with all my advantages interacting with Divine Spark, my understanding was very limited, and my approach was blunt. For example, I strongly doubted that copying the draconic method of reinforcing my body with Purified Spark was hardly the most efficient method of strengthening myself ... but it was the only method I had.

In that vein, Helga’s hands were tied as well — and not the fun way.

Of course, that left another problem, which led to the reason for Helga’s question. I needed to find an unoccupied plane for Mariel to complete her Apotheosis. The trick we used for Helga was beautiful and elegant ... but ultimately, it was only possible due to her exceptionally unorthodox Divine Nature, making such a small location viable.

Using the same trick would waste Mariel’s potential. Assuming that was possible in the first place.

“Do you think that we could use the same trick we used here for Mariel as an emergency,” I asked. I already guessed the answer, but I wanted to be sure.

Helga thought about it a bit, then shrugged in defeat. “No, not even if you’re willing to sacrifice the potential. The whole point of my domain is the Darkness Ward hiding me from the System. Mariel has both the Light and the Darkness, either could easily break the ward while she goes through the merging process. And, the less we talk about the potential combination issues, the better.”

“I see,” I admitted with a soft sigh even as I started walking, and she accompanied me silently. We went toward the forge I had built there.

The forge wasn’t as big as the one I had in the capital, but since I could use my magic without limit here, it was far more advanced.

“What’s your plan?” Helga asked, subdued as she helped me to create a batch of beacons that would hopefully allow me to return faster than my previous attempt.

“Nothing complicated,” I said, feeling frustrated as well. The last thing I wanted was to leave the main material plane now that everything was in order once again. Unfortunately, that was

inevitable. "I'm going to go and do my best to find an unoccupied plane."

"And, do you think that's doable?" Helga asked, realizing the problem.

"Likely not. So I would probably use Mariel's light spark as cover to invade one of the weaker undead planes and hope that it would take a while for the Eternals to realize the change."

"Not exactly a plan, is it?" Helga said, and I shrugged. Sometimes, that was the best one could do. "How about the beacons?" she asked.

"That's a bigger problem. In their current state, they won't last more than a few minutes unless I embed Tantric Spark in them..."

"And, that would create too big of a risk of discovery," she said.

"Exactly, so I'll probably create a web of teleportation that allows you to eject those to the Primordial Aether. I'll also create a pattern that'll send them out periodically, and I'll do my best to return in a week or two. But predicting that it's hard, and I want you to send them out with full power if you face an emergency," I said. "I don't want you to take unnecessary risks."

She looked frustrated about the need, but luckily, she wasn't like the others, who might have taken such a thing personally.

With that, we spent the rest of the day filled with magical research and construction — interrupted by a few quickies. I did my best to perfect the beacon deployment system, which was frustrating as I was struggling to create some kind of magical message that I could detect from a great distance, but at the same time, it needed to avoid the attention of the Eternals.

But, after some struggle, I managed to create something that I hoped to work, one that relied on creating a very complicated mana flare instead of a better message, one that could easily be written off as background noise by anyone who wasn't looking for it.

Hopefully, it would help. At the same time, Helga finished creating a complicated ward that used Light and Darkness mana, balanced by tantric, one that would keep Mariel stable through the chain of teleportations.

Hopefully.

"Be careful," Helga said after placing another kiss on my lips.

"You too. And, don't do anything to reveal your location even if you receive a message from

others. Just send the signal we arranged, and I'll return. We can't risk them baiting you."

"Don't worry too much," she said with a wet chuckle. I kissed her one last time, and teleported to the capital. Luckily, the prince's intervention gave a good reason for the disappearance of the master blacksmith. Still, I left a few letters for the apprentices, writing them like I had prepared beforehand.

Additionally, I had left several messages that could only be read by the girls, using our shared experience as a clue. The messages didn't say anything other than wait near the capital, in case someone else understood it.

Then, I teleported to my real destination.

To Mariel.

For a moment, I said nothing, examining her beautiful visage and her marred wings. "You're such a source of trouble," I said with a chuckle as I started to build the ward Helga had designed around her. "You're lucky that you're so pretty. Because you're the most troublesome one," I said with a mocking sigh."

Then, I grabbed her and teleported away.

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Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Five

“I didn’t miss this mess,” I murmured as I found myself floating in the Primordial Aether, the main material plane under me, about to disappear the moment I stepped out of its range and found myself in the chaotic flow of the rest, Mariel safely with me in the ward.

I said nothing else as I waited until the first beacon was launched. The magical location was clear. More importantly, the Eternals didn’t suddenly come rushing, allowing me to mark it as a tentative success. With that, I let the chaos of the Primordial Aether drag me away...

Luckily, it wouldn’t last for months, unlike my boring, extended swim through Primordial Aether while I hung onto the Eternal ship.

I had a permanent, unbreakable connection with Seldanna. It wouldn’t have been enough to find her location in the Primordial Aether despite the strength of our connection if that was all. But, Seldanna was fully merged with her plane as well.

And, that was much easier to locate.

That, along with Seldanna’s ability to send me some rudimentary messages through our connection — enough to denote an alarm — I was able to leave her alone for months without being bothered. All the while, the only interesting thing was the Eternals skipping the date I had given to them while disguised as the ancient god of nature, despite the explicit threat of not dealing with them anymore if they skipped it.

Lucky.

Of course, I wasn’t stupid enough to miss the fact that their lack of communication had some dangerous implications, but considering the number of issues I was trying to address, I was willing to exchange long-term dangers with short-term calm.

Not exactly the healthiest of decision-making, but the best I could do under the circumstances.

It was a pity that I couldn’t use the same trick to find Helga, and therefore the material plane. The darkness wards we used to hide her from the System had that inconvenient side effect.

Thinking of Helga, I reached for the Knowledge Spark I took from her, trying to use it to solve a magical problem. Unfortunately, while it helped, its help was far less sublime without her presence. It still helped somewhat, but its advantages overlapped with Intelligence too much to measure accurately.

Of course, Primordial Aether was complicated and treacherous enough that even with a strong beacon, it still took two days for me to reach my destination. Far better than the months the earlier trip had consumed.

The only trouble, was that wasn't exactly an indicator of how long the next trip would take. It could take half a day, or half a month depending on pure luck. Well, maybe not luck, but I lacked a more detailed understanding of Primordial Aether.

And, teleporting was certainly not feasible unless I wanted to end up in pieces.

I wanted to stop by Seldanna first and talk more in detail and share the developments. We had a lot of strategic details to consider, both in terms of the past, and in terms of invading another plane and its potential to trigger the undead forces into other actions ... but also, more simply, I missed her.

It had been months.

However, those plans disappeared the moment I arrived at the edge of her plane ... and met with a nasty surprise. There was another plane orbiting hers. It was a smaller plane, one that was radiating necrotic mana.

Worse, the sudden orbit was clearly not a coincidence. There was some kind of magical ship between the two planes, one that was almost ten times larger than the trade ship I had been a part of, using some kind of thick magical connection to create a resonance between the two planes, pulling those two closer.

It was a complicated process, one that used a lot of mana and time, clearly going on for months and required at least another month to complete ... but it was surprisingly sneaky. After all, the ability to travel through the Primordial Aether was shockingly rare.

I was glad that it didn't require an immediate reaction. I bypassed the planar border easily — reminding my explosive entrance the first time, thrown out violently.

The moment I entered, I made sure that my surroundings were empty, and then I flared my mana. Immediately, a response appeared, and the plants around me started to grow, the flowers bloomed and floated before coalescing into a familiar figure.

"I missed you," she said.

"Good, I'll be waiting for you, come here," I said. Her avatar looked confused, clearly not

expecting me to stay near the border, but she trusted me enough to dispel her avatar and start traveling directly.

She didn't have the ability to teleport. Luckily, that was not a problem. With a wave of my hand, I created a gate for her to step through, finding her location even easier.

"You're here," she gasped as she jumped into my arms.

"My beautiful goddess," I said even as the most amazing flower smell filled my whole being. Coming from her, but also from the environment. And, it wasn't even a spell or a conscious effort. No, nature itself was reacting to her presence, the plants doing their best to impress her.

A nature goddess indeed. No wonder my Endurance was continuously improving. She was far more aligned with her Divine identity, no doubt a benefit of assimilating the memory scraps and melding further with her Spark.

Before I could say anything else, I felt her lips over mine, which tasted all the beautiful fruits at once. It was the best way to be silenced.

We had a lot of things to talk about, but as I felt her dress, made of flowers and leaves, melt under my touch and reveal her perfect body, I decided that those things could wait a few minutes.

Then, I felt her rip off my shirt with a shocking passion while her legs wrapped around my waist, and corrected.

A few hours ... half a day at most.

It didn't matter much, especially since Mariel was in a stable condition and no urgent event was knocking on my door. Her hips danced, reminding me of her passion, while I shifted my lips to her neck. "Oh, I missed this," she moaned, while I groaned appreciatively.

Not to mention, it wasn't exactly a waste of time. As we kissed, my mana merged with hers ... and through her, I could feel the whole plane as a singular entity.

There, Intelligence showed its biggest benefit. Even as I enjoyed the kiss — and more — to the fullest, I was able to analyze her connection with the plane. A quick burst of mana allowed her to completely merge with the Divine Spark that had been generated in my absence, giving a nice boost to her. Of course, that meant that the empowering fruits the elves were hoping to receive would be delayed a few months.

But, considering their long lives, such a sacrifice should be an acceptable compromise. “T-that feel great,” Seldanna moaned. “It’s like a headache I didn’t know existed disappeared.” Made sense. More established Gods probably had ways to get rid of the spark they couldn’t merge easily, but Seldanna had yet to develop such a technique.

Meaning her Divine Entity could get polluted relatively easily. Not in a few weeks or months, but years would certainly be a problem.

Luckily, I was there to help.

“Good for you,” I said as I let my lips drag down, capturing her nipple, and turning her appreciation into another moan. “Now, it’s time to pay the price.” With that, I pushed her down, the grass turning into a thick, comfortable bed before she could even touch the ground. “Now, it’s time to pay the price.”

Then, I skipped the foreplay completely and slipped inside her. I would have loved to extend it a bit more, but I wanted to reward her for her first time. After all, she had waited for my return patiently for months, when she could easily create a fake emergency to call me while using the Eternals as an excuse.

“Good goddess,” I said, unable to prevent the humor in my tone completely as I slipped inside. She looked at me in playful anger, but that died quickly as my hips started to move, invading her core just as decisively as my mana invaded her soul.

She readily accepted both.

“A good way to apologize for your long absence,” she said, all she could say before a moan exploded, filling the opening along with an instinctive flare of mana. And, just like that, the meadow turned into a wild forest, the trees growing tens of feet in less than a second.

Making me wonder just how nature would react to her orgasm. Luckily, from the way she clenched around me, I doubted that it would take too long to understand.

“Do you want it fast, or slow?” I asked despite guessing the answer.

While she tried to catch her breath to answer, I cupped her breasts, enjoying her moan even as I made it harder for her to answer.

“J-jerk,” she managed to stammer once I squeezed her nipple, her moan majestic and sexy at the same time. “H-hard,” she added.

I thought about teasing her, but her begging expression was enough to earn my mercy. “Hard, it is,” I declared as I pushed forward...

Her cries echoed across the planar fragment... or, at least, that was how it felt.

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Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Six

“That bastards. To think that they are about to attack my domain...” Seldanna started before her words turned into a chain of curses, some I had never heard before.

I didn't blame her. Realizing that she was just weeks away from a deadly invasion was a nasty realization.

Pity it was just an avatar of hers and not her real body, preventing me from helping her stress in a more direct manner. We had spent almost a full day together without stopping, but it had been barely enough to quench our thirst.

Right now, we were floating in the Primordial Aether, safe in the wards I had created while we observed the Eternals' invasion plan.

“You have to admit, they are not playing around,” I said as I observed the plane in the distance, only visible due to my Tantric spell creating a viewport. “The moment they realized they have to deal with a god, they brought one of their own. And, this time, they are not bothering with an avatar, but attacking with full force. And, to make it more interesting, even if the surprise attack failed, there's no evidence linking them to the attack, giving them plausible deniability. They have perfected their art.”

“Do forgive me if I don't feel impressed by an attack that was about to be launched into my land,” Seldanna said, her voice thick with anger.

She was the most furious I had ever seen, suggesting that there were some unexpected side effects to creating a Divine Domain. Though, maybe I should have expected it. The tighter she connected to her domain, the more it turned into a part of her existence.

Meaning, the upcoming invasion was a highly personal attack. I had no doubt that, if I suggested her to let that attack happen as a part of a complicated plan, she would have fought against it very intensely.

Luckily, that was mostly theoretical. I had no intention of taking the risk of letting a god with more practical experience step into her domain.

“Don't worry, we have enough time to deliver a lot of attacks, especially with my ability to freely interject with the area,” I said.

She looked at me, looking considerably more relaxed. “Yes, you can just attack from outside

until you can break the planar border, and the Primordial Aether will do the rest.”

“No, that won’t work,” I countered.

“Why?” she asked, frustrated. “It looks perfectly doable.”

“Well, let me correct it like this. We can do it, but why should we waste such a golden opportunity,” I said. “I need to find a planar fragment for Mariel to fix her current situation, and the Eternals were kind enough to bring one to us, even showing me the best way to link the two planes together.”

“That’s ... ambitious,” she said, though her tone made it clear that she wasn’t happy about that solution. A part of it was her concern for her Domain, but I had been juggling a complicated relationship long enough to catch the hint of jealousy not too far away from the surface.

“Ambitious, true. Especially linking two domains together without making them merge or drift away. I probably have to come and check every couple weeks for a long while to make sure everything was in order.”

Just like that, Seldanna’s distaste disappeared at the prospect of more visits. “How exactly do you think this long while is,” she asked, trying to sound casual.

“Probably years,” I said, doing my best to hide my smirk. “Maybe you’re right and I should just break the planar border —“

“No, you’re right. It’s an opportunity not to be missed,” Seldanna said, her panic clear despite her avatar making it much easier to hide.

She was cute enough to tempt me to teleport back and show her just how much I missed her, but I suppressed that desire temporarily.

Unfortunately, we still had serious issues to talk about. “It’s not going to be simple. We need to work hard to create a counterforce to distract them.”

“Not elves, right,” she countered. “The war had damaged their numbers badly enough that they need decades to even start to recover from their losses.”

“No,” I said with a shake of my head, my smile wide. “Only the idiot and the desperate try to invade the domain of undead with living beings... And, we’re not desperate.”

“You want to use treants,” she gasped.

“Exactly. That, and I’m almost sure I could fashion some kind of breach using the God Forest... Then, just as they pit all their forces to block the invasion of the treants...” I said.

“Then, what?” she asked, excited.

I gave her a naughty smile. “Well, that’s a surprise. A man needs to have a few to continue impressing a sexy goddess of nature....” I answered as I changed the direction. We had a lot of work to do, and maybe a few more rewards in the process.

“Fascinating,” Seldanna said as she looked at the army of treants that spread in front of us. Ten thousand trees, each filled with endless waves of Nature mana we created through a combination of my purification and Seldanna’s conversion.

A trick that I only dared to pull after checking the whole plain carefully so as not to alert the Eternals. However, compared to the previous times, I was less careful.

Ironically, it was their invasion method that led to it. Clearly, once rejected, their methods were more heavy-handed than I expected. I had no doubt that, even if they didn’t catch anything suspicious, the failure of their invasion would give them enough reason to escalate.

At this point, them getting suspicious about my abilities — well, the abilities of the ancient nature god — would actually be helpful to keep them behind.

And, even if that failed, we still had my other surprise to distract them.

“Are you ready,” I said as I looked at Seldanna. She nodded, and with a wave of her hand, another treant bloomed. It was smaller than the others, barely twenty feet tall rather than five hundred, and made of flowers rather than wood.

I said nothing about the shape. The avatar was throbbing with Divine Spark. Those flowers didn’t need thorns to be dangerous.

Then, I waved my hand, and another avatar — a fake one in my case — grew with a shocking speed. A wooden dragon, with a five hundred feet wingspan, almost a thousand feet long from head to tail.

An avatar worthy of my fake personality.

“Let’s go,” I said as I stepped on the dragon, and Seldanna’s avatar followed. I used the dragon

as a focus to cast another spell. This time, another movement appeared, and a huge ark appeared, enough to hold this impressive army.

Even with our combined abilities, it took two full days for us to create it. The size was not a problem, but the fact that it had to hold against the ravages of the Primordial Aether, even for a moment, was something else.

Especially since I couldn't just cheat by using Tantric and alerting everyone in the process.

The ark started to fly, leaving Seldanna's real body behind. Through her avatar, Seldanna cast a spell, and the planar border parted open just enough for the ark to move out, showing the extent of the control Seldanna was exerting on the fragment.

Just like that, we were floating in the Primordial Aether. I pushed the Ark to go at maximum speed, each second melting the surface of the Ark. I watched the artifact that the Eternals had been using to connect two planes to see if they would notice such a big commotion.

It didn't seem like they did, but even if they did, it wouldn't matter. I could feel that the planar fragments were already close enough to exert some kind of magical pull on each other.

The Ark cut through Primordial Aether, each second further breaking the defensive structure. "Do you think we'll be able to reach the other side safely," Seldanna asked.

It was not a bad question. Made purely from Nature mana, I doubted the Ark could last another minute. And, even if Primordial Aether behaved somewhat normal near planar bodies, there was no guarantee that a sudden chaotic wave wouldn't have extended the distance by a few minutes ... or hours.

"Don't worry. I can always cheat," I reminded her.

"Good," she said even as her avatar reached and squeezed my hand.

Then, we hit the planar border of the undead Domain.

The moment the contact occurred, I felt the mana at the planar border shift and solidify. The speed at the border transformed was incredible. The mana pushed against the Ark. It wasn't as destructive as Primordial Aether, but it didn't need to be. All they needed was to keep us out for a minute, and the environment would do the rest.

Unfortunately, he didn't have the time. It might have been different if they expected a counter-

attack, but they did not. The Ark had already rammed through the border before they could start reacting, costing them precious moments.

We pushed through the border, and entered the plane.

Into the domain of a true necrotic god.

The easy part was over.

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 62

Endurance: 73 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 58,410}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Seven

“Wow, this is...” Seldanna’s avatar gasped as she took the view in.

Her shock was understandable. The plane was filled with undead as far as the eye could see. I had often referred to the undead as endless, but only now, I realized just how inadequate that description was. I hadn’t dared to explore the plane directly, afraid of being caught and ruining the surprise.

Looking at their numbers, I was glad that I didn’t try to go with the alternative of letting the planes collide and defend the invasion. With those numbers, I would have had to pull all the stops to have a hope of defeating them, serving my secrets to Eternals on a plate while also dealing with devastation that would have been far deeper than the previous undead invasion.

Sometimes, fortune really favored the brave.

“Do you think we can win,” Seldanna asked.

“Probably. And it’s not like it matters even if we lose,” I answered with a shrug. I might have warned her about army morale and being confident, but that was not exactly a concern while leading an army of wooden constructs. “You’re only here as an avatar, and I’m confident that I can escape with most of our Divine Spark. At a minimum, we would destroy a majority of their army.”

As I said that, the Ark finally landed on the ground with a devastating crash, the collusion enough to destroy the zombies in its immediate surroundings. Then, the wards that were holding back millions of nature mana cracked, creating a thick wave to collide against the suffocating necrotic mana — enough that, if I had landed on this plane just after my accidental exile, I probably would have died in seconds.

How much difference does a few months make, I thought even as I watched ten thousand wooden giants leave the Ark along with the mana wave, attacking the undead army before they could react, each greedily pulling the surrounding necrotic mana to convert into nature mana.

After all, they were essentially a singular unit. Another god forest that was connected by fully melded Divine Spark, giving them an incredible efficiency advantage. I even made sure to give them a very old look, making them look like an ancient legion my fake personality had created long ago.

I wanted to intimidate the Eternals, not send them to a blind panic. And, while an intimidating wooden giant army that a nature god could wield as a weapon was scary, it was nowhere near scary as a god that could create such an army once a month.

Making them believe that the former was the case was to my benefit ... especially considering my other trick would make them panic enough — preferably somewhere away from here.

“Impressive, isn’t it,” I commented while I controlled the treant army to destroy the undead army with shocking efficiency. Seldanna just nodded, fascinated by the speed the endless legion dwindled.

Admittedly, while it was an impressive sight, the achievement of destroying the first section of the army was hardly a challenge. Mostly because none of the army in front of us actually had Divine Spark in them to counter the spells I had been constantly casting through the treants — their nature making it very easy to channel the same spell through all of them at the same time.

It was the benefit of an ambush. There were no death knights or liches to counter my spells to give a fighting chance to the zombies, and there were no skeletal dragons in the mix to tussle directly with the treants. I had no doubt that they had such members, but they were probably somewhere nearer to the center.

After all, why bother commanding an army that was happy enough to just wait without doing anything. Add in the fact that zombies were best when their numbers could spread along a huge line endlessly to hunt the peasants and strain the supply lines rather than fighting against elite forces.

Especially elite forces like ours that had no mind to be intimidated, and no muscles to get tired.

Worse, we had one more decisive advantage. The sudden clash of two huge waves of opposing mana was overwhelming enough to extend into the connection between the material and the Aether. Unless they were to lose the majority of their commanders to the violent Aether waves, they couldn’t just teleport nearby, leaving only an ordinary method.

At a distance, I noticed a bone dragon, mounted by a lich. My dragon construct made a gesture, and a giant bolt of nature mana flew toward it, obliterating it with one hit.

Leaving a lingering cloud of Necrotic Spark behind.

“My opponent is about to battle is about to get fun. Take over the army,” I said to Seldanna.

“Are you sure you want to take that directly? Maybe I should be the one. I’m just an avatar—” she said as she watched that mist created by Necrotic Spark growing wildly, but I silenced her with a gesture.

“No, we talked about this, take over the treants,” I ordered. She sighed as she jumped down, floating on top of the biggest one. At the same time, the army paused for a second, giving the zombies a chance to counter-attack. It would have been devastating if our army had any physical weakness...

But they didn’t, so it only meant a monetary dip in their destruction.

She didn’t have my tactical acumen, but she was better at using Nature Spark as a conduit. She was not as good at casting offensive magic, but she was far better at cleansing the land and creating a thick forest that could support the battle, so the combat efficiency of the treants stayed roughly the same, just with a more defensive focus than offensive.

Pity she was only there as an avatar and this wasn’t her Divine Domain. I would have loved to see just how strong she was when she truly cut loose.

I still could have watched her for hours ... but, unfortunately, I had something else to pay attention to.

My opponent.

I rushed forward on my dragon, though I let a layer of wood cover me, hiding my real body to make him believe I was here as a dragon avatar.

He had already managed to push enough Divine Spark to create an avatar before I could arrive, which was a part of my plan. After all, it was far easier to steal from his Avatar than his real body — which was doubtlessly rushing forward as well.

“You dare invade my domain!” the necrotic god shouted, his voice exploding with a wave of necrotic mana, every undead that it touched empowered significantly. And, if we had an ordinary army, most of it would have been already dead with that one spell.

Enough to show that, fighting a god in his domain was no joke. If it wasn’t for the other part of my plan, I would have been already planning to escape after stealing as much as Divine Spark to turn it into deadly guerrilla warfare even with my advantage.

Instead, I responded in kind. “Do you think I would let you invade my Domain without a

consequence, you upstart dog!” my dragon shouted back, while I used it to pull the same trick.

The last time I had used that trick, it had left me damaged and injured, my body unable to handle the intensity. Luckily, since that time, my Endurance had increased several times, making that a momentary discomfort even as I channeled almost a million mana without a ward to assist me.

It destroyed another chunk of his army while countering his trick. “You dare challenge me!” he shouted as he cast a spell, and the destroyed zombies started floating up and merging, soon turning into a huge dragon, even bigger than mine.

Since I was playing the role of a narcissistic god, I decided to act true to that personality, and channeled mana into the dragon avatar, making it grow even bigger, using the nature mana to its best advantage.

However, just because I was acting like a narcissistic moron didn’t mean I had to be one. I used the incredible mana flare to conceal several other spells, the most important being a subtle detection ward to detect mana types, one that I cast into the Aether dimension to make its detection even more impossible.

Searching for anything other than necrotic.

I wanted to find out if there was an Eternal base here, one that could be conveniently destroyed during the battle, with all the information conveniently getting lost in the explosion.

However, even with my abilities, casting a detection ward that would search a whole planar fragment was not an instant task, especially when I was trying to keep its existence hidden.

I let my dragon rush toward the undead one, and they started the most pointless melee battle of all time, endlessly regenerating wood against endlessly recovering undead flesh.

Luckily, I had my complicated magic to keep me entertained...

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{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 62

Endurance: 73 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 58,410}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Eight

The battle of two dragons raged at the dark skies of the dead land, while Seldanna led our invincible treant army with great efficiency, leveraging their inherent advantage over the disposable zombies in great efficiency as she destroyed them.

Without the liches and death knights to support to army, she was even able to focus on transforming our breach point into a lush, raging forest, though this time, it didn't look like her usual beautiful, calm forests, but a raging chaotic piece filled with thorns and spikes, looking threatening.

She flooded the seeds with a shocking amount of mana, putting a drain even to the amount I was able to provide to her momentarily, but I didn't ask her to stop. It was a strategically dangerous commitment, creating a place for them to strike back. It was not the kind of strategy I would have committed.

But I didn't stop her either. If the plane was populated by humans or elves — or even any kind of living being — I might have insisted on maintaining strategic mobility to hit their weak spots and logistic weaknesses, but those concepts didn't apply to a bunch of unliving that didn't have any need other than necrotic mana.

Then, there was the other reason Seldanna had a great advantage. I noticed three liches approaching the battle on top of a bone dragon. With a raging cry of nature mana explosion, I threw the necrotic avatar in that direction. Then followed.

[+3,692 Purified Spark]

And, immediately grabbed and converted the Purified Spark they had. Another small but noticeable jump to my reserves. I didn't immediately use it to boost my stats, but instead used it to convert Primordial Aether I continuously grabbed from a small breach I maintained, using the new amount to quicken the process even more.

Focusing on converting the Aether and the Necrotic mana would have been even faster ... but that, I didn't want to commit to.

Not before I could find the location of the Eternals. The less information they gather, the better. I still didn't know the full range of their magical capabilities, but I had seen enough to be scared.

I continued to fight 'recklessly' as I threw around the necrotic dragon like a rag doll, to the point of almost pitying the avatar. Even as it desperately drained the ready necrotic mana to empower itself, he was not able to match the endless mana I was channeling.

Cheating was always fun.

I moved around, faster and faster, destroying more of his arriving leadership cadre.

[+3,190 Purified Spark]

War was a great tragedy, but not when our side was made exclusively of disposable pawns, and our enemies were exclusively undead monstrosities that were best erased from existence. I moved around, preventing the arrival of the stronger casters, while Seldanna continued to destroy the rest of the army and expand the forest even more.

However, regardless of the ease I was having, I didn't dare to slow down, continuing my aim to search for the inevitable Eternal base, desperate to find them before the real body of the necrotic god arrived to face me.

Unfortunately, that, I failed. At one moment, without a warning, I felt the enemy avatar getting stronger. Suddenly, I couldn't just throw it around while destroying his armies with ease.

The necrotic god was near, and I was nowhere near destroying him.

Sigh.

I turned my gaze toward the horizon, and soon noticed a lich, floating forward, easily mistaken for an ordinary undead if it wasn't for the suffocating waves of necrotic mana flowing out of him like an endless wave.

Not an easy enemy.

It was the time for the contingency, one that I was hoping not to use. I pumped my avatar with as much mana as it could hold for a moment, and let it sink into the ground and turn into a tree for a moment, radiating an explosion of nature mana, trying to trigger plant growth all around the plane while it desperately drew in the mana.

For a moment, it looked like I was trying to snatch control of the plane from the necrotic god.

As far as the distractions went, it was spectacular.

It was a stupid move that was impossible to make. I knew that, and my enemy knew that ... but the problem was, he had to understand why I would make such a stupid move despite its apparent uselessness.

He pulled back along with his avatar, his tendrils of magic extending from a distance.

I used the opportunity to teleport away, not wanting to waste the time I gained. At best, I barely had a minute. I used my mana-conversion breach to slip out of the plane, and immediately moved to another ward that had been attached to the surface of the plane.

One that is made of Tantric mana to resist corrosion. Unlike the giant ark bursting through the planar border, it was a secret operation, therefore allowing different attacks.

I moved around the planar border as quickly as possible, and created another breach, deploying a hundred more constructs to the mixture.

However, this time, they were not treants, but something I had forged. Essentially, they were empty sets of armors, filled with enough pseudo-HP to make them look like they were full, but without anything to heal, it was useless.

Ultimately, those suits of armor were wholly ineffective when it came to fighting when considering the amount of effort I had put into them and the mana I had spent in their construction...

However, still, they were a great distraction for two reasons. First, every suit of armor came with a set of metal wings, each layered with enough illusion spells to trick an actual god — hopefully.

And, second, each had its own mana storage filled with an incredible amount of Light Mana, which I had carefully converted using Mariel as a conduit. I could have skipped the whole armor fiasco and used the light mana as an explosive ward and be more effective.

But that wouldn't have scared the necrotic god just as much.

The light was devastating against necrotic mana.

Since I was already back on the plane proper, I just teleported to my fake-avatar. The Aether Dimension was still in an extremely chaotic state, making teleportation impossible for anyone else, but still, it was nothing compared to the true chaos of Primordial Aether.

I arrived just as the necrotic god realized the whole trick with the tree avatar was nothing but a distraction, and sent his own dragon avatar toward me while he started moving toward the border. Pity that he was too late.

If he had been just ten seconds faster, he would have destroyed my fake-avatar while it was still in its helpless tree form while it was uselessly trying to spread its reach. Unfortunately, I was in place, and just as he was about to reach me, I made the avatar transform once more, turning into the dragon, maintaining the roots...

Which suddenly jumped out of the ground and stabbed the necrotic avatar, greedily draining the Divine Spark that created it and passing it into me.

I had to admit. At that moment, I pitied my opponent. Probably under the 'kind request' of the eternal, he had turned every defensive asset into an offensive one for a very dangerous assault, only to be caught completely unprepared, and just as he was about to deliver the counterattack, he was caught in a deadly pincer.

Which cost him a very expensive avatar, which he didn't like much considering his cries.

[+731,931 Purified Spark]

I wondered what he would think if he knew his Necrotic Spark was not locked behind a ward but devoured.

Nothing good, I presumed.

Worse, before he could go to the border to deal with the 'angels', my avatar caught with his real body, and attacked.

I would have loved to say that I destroyed him ... but the reality was, it was the opposite. Even with the endless mana, I was channeling to the dragon avatar, the best I could do was to delay him, with every spell of his destroying a chunk of the avatar.

If it was actually empowered by Divine Spark, those blows would have dispersed that spark, weakening the avatar in quick order.

But, since I was a cheater, I just continued to pump the avatar with more and more mana, its nature spark core easily converting it into nature mana to regrow its limbs. At the same time, I made sure to move that core repeatedly to avoid the blows...

Even with that, it was a hopeless battle for that dragon avatar. Eventually, it would fall.

Unfortunately for my opponent, the keyword was eventually. With Seldanna attacking from one side, and the light constructs attacking from the other, he was rapidly losing his invasion forces, each second costing him another chunk of his forces.

I kept my attention on the dragon avatar, doing my best to maintain the situation. Whether in terms of weakening his immortal army, or expanding the grasp of nature, we were the ones making progress.

It was his turn to come up with a solution.

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 62

Endurance: 73 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 797,223}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Nine

The necrotic god decided to respond conservatively. He continued to attack my avatar directly despite its endless regeneration, while he sent his armies to the forest Seldanna was in the process of creating.

I didn't intervene, letting him commit his army there, happy that I could shift my attention to them and steal their divine Spark immediately. Hundreds of demigod-class undead were impressive, but not enough to take down Seldanna's avatar.

Though, once they mixed with the zombie army and attacked, I found myself revising that opinion. I had underestimated their effectiveness. The immediate presence of their god meant that their Divine Spark was empowered significantly.

And, it clearly had a bigger impact than I expected.

Luckily, Seldanna had already managed to create a huge forest that was strong enough to counter most of their necrotic mana tricks, giving her some kind of home-field advantage, and allowing her to successfully maintain her defense.

For the moment.

Her forward progress was stalled, under the focused magical assault of the necromancers, the treants finally started to fall. Just a few at first, but they managed that achievement without sacrificing any of their own critical pieces.

That caused Seldanna to pull back almost desperately, doing her best to defend every single treant and every inch she had.

Big mistake.

I wondered if it was her unfamiliarity with the large-scale warfare that triggered the mistake. However, it was also likely that it was her divine nature as the goddess of nature that was making her prioritize keeping her creation safe.

Either way, I didn't intervene, letting her make that mistake. Ultimately, it was a mistake that worked to our benefit in our current situation. It showed the necrotic god that his armies had been making progress, albeit slowly, giving him the confidence that he could be successful as long as he maintained that strategy.

I would love to face such a static assault. I had many ways of reversing that ... I just wanted to find the Eternals first.

I continued my desperate battle as I kept my attention on my fake angel constructs that scoured the far end of the plane, their light attacks doing wonders to not only destroy any undead they came across — which wasn't much as almost all of the forces was moved to our side to create an invasion army — but also permanently eradicated the necrotic mana that filled the plane.

The advantage of light mana over necrotic mana was unbelievable.

The former didn't hurt the necrotic god much, but the destruction of the necrotic mana was not a small problem. So, I expected him to send a similar force of liches and death knights to that side to take down the angels at a minimum ... though I was hoping for another avatar to deal with them, which would allow me to steal even more spark from him.

Yet, to my surprise, he neither created an avatar,, nor did he sent any of his army. I failed to understand the reason...

Until one of my detection wards finally discovered a movement toward the edge of the plane a concealment ward stopped working for a moment, and a man started flying toward the angel. "Stop," he shouted, easily blocking the automatic attack of the angel using some mind of the artifact-based magical shield.

At the same time, he decided to speak. "What are you doing! Are your god is willing to throw out the agreement," he declared.

His words were interesting enough that I had split my attention to control the nearest construct, even though it meant my dragon avatar fell to an even greater disadvantage.

As I used the construct to look at the unknown Eternal, I did my best to come to a decision. Should I try and risk capturing their ship, hoping that they didn't implement enough safety measures, or try to bluff them?

The former was the more attractive reward, and if hadn't failed to detect them until their mistake of revealing their presence, I might have chosen to take that risk. But, it was clear that, despite all my improvements, my magical capabilities weren't enough to unravel all their tricks.

Bluffing, it was.

“No, of course not,” I said, speaking through my connection. “It’s just that my exalted god received a better offer.” With that, the construct raised its hand, and cast a focused light spell.

“You dare to betray us,” the Eternal shouted in anger, his artifact blocking the attack relatively well, but he still flew back. “Do you think that anyone else could face our glorious organization,” he declared.

At the same time, their ship started to move. Their hiding capabilities were quite impressive ... but since I had already detected their location, following the movement was much easier compared to the alternative.

My construct acted like it didn’t realize that, and focused its attack on the sole eternal, who was safe from the attack. I could feel them getting ready for an attack. Which was not good news.

Certainly not while I was trying to deal with an actual god in his domain.

Luckily, my tricks were not over. I used all the constructs to attack him together. His artifact wasn’t strong enough to resist that ... but on that side of the plane, there was no mana storm to block teleportation. He teleported right back to his ship.

At the same time, I followed with another attack, one that was even stronger, cracking the planar border, a storm immediately invading as the plane was invaded by Primordial Aether.

At the same time, a horrible Primordial Storm under my control hit the ship, pushing it away. Since the ship was designed to resist the primordial aether successfully, it didn’t cause anything more than cosmetic damage ... but it pushed it out, out of the protective shadow of the planar border ... and just like that, they disappeared into the chaos.

It would take days for them to return even if they wanted to.

Of course, that attack was not for free, and it destroyed all but five constructs, the planar border still broken. I wanted to repair it immediately, but even that momentary split was enough to put my dragon avatar at an even greater disadvantage.

I needed more strength, even if it would make my job harder.

[All Stats +20]

[-600,700 Purified Spark]

[+5 Endurance]

[+4 Intelligence]

The capability increase from the wholesome improvement was considerable, allowing me to control my avatar with an even greater efficiency. However, it would still take a while for me to balance the situation enough to repair the border.

I didn't want the plane to be destroyed. I needed it to help Mariel.

However, I was still fearful about using my truly secretive tricks. What if Eternals had another ship. After all, they successfully managed to hide one. However, before I could make that decision ... I felt a strong movement of Divine Spark.

And another avatar appeared right next to the necrotic god. "Do you think I'll let you destroy my domain!" he cried in anger, his words enhanced my magic.

I wished I had time to slap my own head. For a moment, I forgot that I wasn't the only one that wanted to keep the plane intact. From his perspective, the angels were already defeated, and he had the advantage on the other two dimensions.

Then, it clicked me. Maybe he didn't even realize Eternals were banished successfully. If he noticed their departure, he might very well assume that they were busy counter-attacking the nature plane while we were focused on the battle here.

I wanted him to repair the border, but I didn't want to make it easy. "I'll destroy it if I can't own it," my dragon avatar shouted back, glowing with a threatening amount of mana, looking like a suicide attack.

Admittedly, it was not too different. The sudden empowerment consumed all of the stored mana I had, and I didn't have enough purified spark to convert it speedily enough to match him.

Luckily, I had a nice source of replacement right next to me. I charged toward the new avatar, the empowered dragon strong enough to avoid his panicked attacks.

And, I devoured his second avatar.

[+372,421 Purified Spark]

Not as strong as the first one, but definitely enough for me to recover my mana output. He started creating another avatar ... but this time, rather than splitting his attention between attacking my dragon avatar and creating the avatar, he kept his full focus on creating an

impenetrable defensive ward around the avatar.

I charged toward the ward, it bounced me off ... and I used that momentum shift to suddenly reverse direction, and slam his lich army from behind, taking down a notable minority of them while he finished conjuring his avatar and teleported it away.

[+144,021 Purified Spark]

And, I had another meal in the process.

I rushed toward his actual body once again once he finished with his task. "You're pushing your luck," he shouted, but this time, despite all his anger, his voice was much weaker.

Losing two avatars wasn't exactly trivial.

—

{Strength: 65 Charisma: 65

Precision: 65 Perception: 65

Agility: 65 Manipulation: 65

Speed: 65 Intelligence: 86

Endurance: 98 Wisdom: 65}

{Purified Divine Spark: 712,965}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Ten

“You’re talking a lot for a pathetic god of corpses and garbage,” I shouted back, once again using the Dragon Avatar to speak.

As far as insults were concerned, it wasn’t exactly the most creative one I could come up with, but it still made him attack me with full force. He was already angry after losing two avatars in a row. Insulting to the basis of his existence pushed his anger even further.

This time, rather than engaging him directly, I dodged the attack and moved toward the center of his domain. “Let’s see how you feel once I start destroying your avatars as well,” he shouted as he turned toward Seldanna.

Interesting statement, making me wonder whether he even knew he was facing two gods — supposedly — at the same time, or the Eternals hid that particular nugget of information from him.

Not exactly impossible.

I didn’t want him tangling with Seldanna. She was inexperienced enough in using her powers that even with her actual body, I wouldn’t expect her to win against another god on neutral ground. And, in the domain of another god, only as an avatar ... it would be lucky if she could last a minute.

Luckily, I had the perfect bait. “I wonder how you’ll feel when I use the breach to dump your Divine Spark into the Primordial Aether,” I shouted as I flew away on my dragon, hoping that the possibility of losing more than a million sparks was enough to galvanize him.

After all, he had no idea that his Divine Spark was long gone, purified, and some even turned into stats to empower me further.

“You dare!” he shouted as he immediately changed his direction and started chasing my dragon avatar, the bait working perfectly. A little predictable, but understandable. A million Divine Spark was an impressive amount, particularly considering it had been absorbed perfectly. If he lost it, even capturing two of our avatars wouldn’t make up for it — as Eternals used a very lopsided exchange ratio when it came to trading Divine Spark.

I made a show of trying to rush toward the breach that his avatar was trying to close, only to be knocked away with every attempt. However, ultimately, it was just a trick to have an excuse to

visit every part of his plane, my exaggerated mana attacks giving me to perfect cover to hide my detection spells.

Maybe I was a bit paranoid, but I wanted to make sure there was no other Eternal presence that could report some of my more suspicious moves. I had already pushed my luck enough with the secrets I revealed, even pushing my fake identity as an Ancient god to the limit.

Of course, I might have chosen a more reckless strategy if time was working against us, but that was not the case. With every second, his army got smaller while Seldanna continued to expand our nature reserve, creating a bigger hold for life in the domain.

At the same time, his reckless attacks drained quite a bit of the necrotic mana that was stored in the Aether dimension ... while a few secret wards I implemented there worked hard to turn the rest into nature mana in some warded packets, growing stronger with each minute.

Ready to go off the moment I confirmed the absence of the Eternals.

Of course, extending the battle meant giving a chance for the Eternals to return, but on that, I was a bit more confident. I had built a layer of detection ward over the planar border, made of tantric mana to make sure it could resist the ravages of Primordial Aether, ready to alert me for their approach.

And, in Primordial Aether, I was confident I could take any forces they would send to a relatively distant location like ours during an emergency — as far as that word has any meaning with the crazy dimensions of Primordial Aether.

Pity that I couldn't say the same for what they could bring to bear outside the main material plane.

But that was a concern for the far future.

For now, I just needed to defeat my first true divine enemy, which was a great achievement even if he was completely lacking in any true tactical sense, which was only partially about my secret abilities. He was too used to corpse-wave tactics to develop a habit of reading the enemy tactics. Worse, he was too panicked by the prospect of losing his Divine Spark to even question why I was spending hours repeating the same trick again and again.

I doubted that it would be the experience when I faced my next divine opponent. The more I fought against him, the more I started to suspect that his strategic ineptitude was one of the reasons the Eternals supported him.

After all, an unaware puppet was the best one.

I might have pitied his situation ... but necromancers, especially ones that had committed enough massacres to reach the position of divinity — whether or not with the help from the Eternals immaterial.

Half a day later, I had managed to scour the plane. I destroyed three wards that belonged to Eternals, though they were empty other than some raw resources and a few basic detection wards, clearly functioning more as listening posts and emergency hideouts.

More importantly, I was confident that I didn't miss anything else.

Without a warning, I teleported toward the bordering spot that was still being ravaged by Primordial Aether, a consequence of his split attention and the weakness of his avatar. Without a warning, I appeared next to the avatar, draining it aggressively.

[+225,918 Purified Spark]

At the same time, I triggered all the wards I had buried in the Aether dimension. “Now, Seldanna,” I ordered, and she started channeling all the mana she could to the planar border, rapidly turning its structure from necrotic to nature.

Naturally, that allowed even more Primordial Aether to invade the plane.

“Please stop, you're going to destroy everything,” he shouted. “I surrender.”

I ignored him, or his sudden attempts to escape right into the center of his domain, creating a new dimensional barrier around him with a far smaller domain.

Even going as far as completely pulling back from the domain, leaving it suddenly ownerless. And, just like that, the speed at Seldanna assimilated the plane hastened immensely, new forests appearing each second.

“What a disappointing ending,” I murmured. In his haste to protect himself from what he saw as the inevitable destruction of his plane, he had committed the worst mistake a god could commit. He locked himself in a small domain, surrounded by the domain of another divine.

Essentially, he put himself in the same position as Helga, but in that case, we had driven by a deep calculation based on Helga's abilities and the unique location of that domain.

His was fueled by poor strategy and cowardice. I had to admit, it ruined my mood to even

banter with him. Instead, I created a thick ward around his domain, one that made sure that he would stay pinned and couldn't go anywhere.

Especially since I didn't use nature mana, which necrotic mana could fight against in equal grounds; but my unique brand of light mana that was empowered with pseudo-HP, which necrotic mana could fight against about as efficiently as dry paper could fight against fire.

Another silencing ward to keep his pathetic begging hidden, I turned my attention to the rest of the domain. First, to Seldanna. "You can stop," I called as her avatar appeared next to me.

"Really. How about you let me take this plane, and we can find another for your angel," she said. Worse, it wasn't a demand, but a request while Seldanna did her best to look innocent and vulnerable, her avatar turning into soft, gentle flowers immediately.

Having a goddess as a lover was amazing ... but also came with complications. Buying gifts, for example, was far more difficult.

"How about I get you a new plane once I understand how the Eternals linked the planes together," I offered. Which was an unexpected gift from them. With their sudden departure, they didn't have the time to take back their artifact, giving me a chance to duplicate it.

Not easily, I guessed, but much better than trying to come up with a method myself.

"Deal," she said, her smile pressed against my cheek and disappeared, showing that, she might have exaggerated her displeasure slightly to earn a promise.

I had to admit, it was well played. She earned herself a punishment with that trick along with her gift — but I doubted that she would dislike it.

But, that was for the future. I teleported next to her. "Let's go," I said, then escorted her to the nature domain.

And, escorted an unconscious Mariel back.

It was time to awaken my cute headmistress.

—

{Strength: 65 Charisma: 65

Precision: 65 Perception: 65

Agility: 65 Manipulation: 65

Speed: 65 Intelligence: 86

Endurance: 98 Wisdom: 65}

{Purified Divine Spark: 938,885}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Eleven

The idea behind helping Mariel from her coma was simple ... but not exactly easy. It required a lot of care and attention, as well as time.

It was why I started the process even before finishing up the necrotic god properly, instead, of letting the light ward constantly attack and weaken him further. Even locked in a small domain, it took a while to take him down, and I didn't want to keep Mariel waiting anymore.

I created a thick shell of mana around her as the first step, one that covered about a mile. However, this time, I created two layers. A thicker outer layer that would keep any interference from outside blocked.

And, an inner layer made of the most malleable pure mana I could create, perfect for her to change and manipulate as she needed once she started stirring back. With that protection layer complete, I turned my attention to the area that was covered by the ward, purifying every inch with great care, not leaving even a hint of necrotic mana to ruin the process.

Then, I brought Mariel into the center, and gently coaxed her into her shell, touching her Divine Spark gently with my mana, and led the smallest tendril which was a mixture of Darkness and Light out, slowly spreading through the tiny domain, doing my best to copy how Helga and Seldanna achieved the same aim.

I waited, holding my breath. A minute passed, then two minutes ... five minutes, making me wonder whether I needed to do something more.

Then, her Divine Spark started spreading. Slowly at first, but slowly picking up speed.

"Excellent," I murmured as I moved out of her domain. I still had several wards that allowed me to observe every minute change that was going on, but I had other things to do.

First, the enemy god. I teleported to the outside of his cage while at the same time, tapping into the Aether Dimension, using all the available purified spark to drain necrotic mana, converting it into the modified light mana, and flooding the ward.

Once the transformation was complete, gods were strong and resilient, especially in their own domains. Unfortunately, to my enemy, that wasn't exactly good news. It only expanded his suffering while I cut down his Divinity down bit by bit, until he ceased to exist.

Not in a glorious last stand, but with a pathetic whimper.

Giving me the most incredible bounty I had ever received.

[+4,491,152 Purified Spark]

I immediately channeled the most into my stats. Purified spark had its uses, but not without the necessary power to control it. As I received my new burst of power, I could feel my abilities reaching a new level. With all stats increasing, almost double, the combined effect was far more than just multiplying it by two.

[+50 All Stats]

[+20 Endurance]

[+15 Intelligence]

[- 4,282,460 Purified Spark]

It was a useful upgrade as I had a very tedious task at hand. Turning the plane into somewhere that Mariel could adapt as quickly as possible. Which was much harder to do for her than it was for Helga or Seldanna. Helga only had to create a tiny domain for herself, making her job easy.

And, Seldanna had both the heritage of the old Nature God that tried to possess her, and a huge spread of existing creatures, both elves and trees, that she was aligned well to use as vectors.

Mariel only had a ruined, dead plane still filled with zombies.

She was lucky that my abilities lent themselves to such a cleanup task particularly well, and the current spread of assets only made it easier.

First, I commanded our treant army to spread around the plane, even teleporting some of them to distant corners. Then I used the avatar I still had — diminished since I didn't need all that power — to trigger them.

First, transforming them into giant trees, then ordering them to flood the plane with their mana, triggering a sudden vibrant growth all along the plane, destroying the remaining presence completely.

However, as they pushed life into their surroundings, they started to lose their color, fading silently. I let them do so, intervening only when they were at the edge of collapsing. Even then, I didn't heal them, but kept them in that state. I had a plan for them, but I was hoping that it wouldn't be necessary.

It was a simple yet tedious work, one that took almost a week.

Meanwhile, Mariel managed to create a tentative bond with the small area I had created for her, but her coma was still a problem. Clearly, such a basic link wasn't enough to relieve the soul pressure. Maybe she would have been cured if I left her here for a few decades. It was a time that most divine beings treated as a momentary rest, but my perception hadn't been warped that much yet.

Not to mention, there was no guarantee the Eternal would leave us alone for that long. And, trying to defend her during an attack was far more dangerous than the little experiment I had.

I pulled all the Divine Spark I had from the main avatar and challenged the Nature Spark back to Seldanna. At the same time, I drained all the mana from the Avatar. The outer layers rotted with a rapid speed, falling apart before I gust of wing spread those pieces around to turn into fertilizer.

After the amount of mana it had been channeled through that wood, it made an excellent fertilizer.

All that remained of that giant avatar was a seed, one that maintained a tenuous connection with the near-dead forest around us.

At the same time, I grabbed a unit of new Divine Spark that Mariel slowly spreading into her new domain.

I named it Twilight Spark. The theme and the feeling it gave me fit it perfectly.

[+1 Twilight Spark]

Then, I moved to the center of Mariel's new domain and buried that seed there, gently leading the solo point of Twilight Spark I had taken from her. First, it crystallized, making the seed a Chosen. Then, very carefully, I spread the weak spark into a demigod soul, and at the same time, started feeding pseudo-HP and pure mana.

[-1 Twilight Spark]

Unlike the flood of nature mana, the combined treatment didn't allow the tree to suddenly sprout into a giant tree but barely allowed it to sprout. As it sprouted, the Divine Spark mixed into its structure further, reaching into the first step of godhood.

The same trick I had pulled with my God Forest, creating an unthinking, unfeeling divine vessel.

The perfect weapon for a goddess.

It took half a day of careful caring for the tree to reach a foot of length. At that point, Mariel's domain finally embraced it, her tendrils of mana touching.

I touched the connection where they melded, allowing Mariel to bond with it. Slowly, her Divine Spark started to flow to it, strengthening the budding tree. Its trunk turned into a dull, tainted silver color ... no, not tainted, I corrected a moment later, but shadowy. Like they were dancing at the surface, dulling and brightening repeatedly.

Similarly, the leaves turned into bright gray, but with dark streaks spreading through its structure, glowing and devouring light at the same time.

Fascinating, I thought even as made a temporary connection with the tree, and stole quite a bit more Twilight Spark. Luckily, the budding tree got strong enough to handle it.

[+57 Twilight Spark]

I used that spark to convert purified main into Twilight mana, which, assisted by my stats, was far faster than Mariel could have achieved with the same amount of Spark. Her small domain was filled with Twilight Spark, but it was just a start.

I teleported out, and started Twilight Spark to connect the god tree with the other trees that were about to die ... which was only possible because every single tree had originally been a part of that avatar, allowing the connection to be established successfully, but not easily.

I had to visit every single tree by myself and build the connections one by one, each taking a minute to successfully establish, and that was only with my most recent stat boost. Without it, it would have probably taken hours for every tree.

Even in its shortened version, ten thousand trees meant ten thousand minutes, it took a week without even a wink of sleep. But, it allowed her slowly strengthening Twilight God Forest to spread across the plane, allowing her to bond with it much faster.

Two more days.

And her eyes opened.

I was there, waiting for her.

“Good morning, sleepyhead.”

—

{Strength: 115 Charisma: 115

Precision: 115 Perception: 115

Agility: 115 Manipulation: 115

Speed: 115 Intelligence: 151

Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 115}

{Purified Divine Spark: 1.147,577}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Twelve

“W-where am I ... the war ... this feeling,” Mariel murmured, the chain of questions fading as she felt herself dealing with the situation. Understandable, considering not only did she wake up in a completely unfamiliar location after a long pause, but also she woke up very slowly.

I didn't say anything for a moment, letting her process the moment. After all, she was a bonafide goddess, with all the additional power it brought along. Their transformation didn't exactly come with a full range of stats, more limited based on the conceptual basis of their transformation, but there was still a certain base increase in question.

“To answer your questions in sequence,” I said only when her confusion faded. “We're in a planar fragment that you're currently turning into your divine domain to somehow allow you to bond with two different Divine Sparks. The war was months ago, and it's already behind us, with serious interesting consequences. And, that feeling is probably the Divine Tool I had created for you, a forest that not only seed life across the plane, but also works entirely on Twilight Mana.”

“Twilight mana? What's that,” she asked, focusing on the question with the most immediate answer.

“I have no idea. It's what I have been calling the form of your new Divine Spark once Light and Darkness mana melded. How did that happen, by the way?”

“I ... I don't remember much,” she admitted reluctantly. “I remember defending the school against the beast wave, but then an undead horde appeared on the horizon. I decided to go and handle them before they could join the war, but when I went there, I saw nothing but weak zombies.”

“And, let me guess, that was when they hit you with a mysterious weapon, and you lost consciousness,” I guessed. It explained how the crown prince somehow managed to capture her ... and it also explained how she was still alive. It confirmed something that I had been suspecting for a while.

She was an experiment.

Not for the Eternals in general, as if that had been the case, they would have just captured her rather than relying on what they clearly thought to be their lessers. It was much more likely to be one of the high-ranking members, trying to hide things from the rest.

My guess. Either the angel with two types of mana that was responsible for the ambush, or his boss.

Either way, it explained the way they decided to get rid of me. They wanted to make sure I didn't ruin their experiment.

Too bad it backfired on them spectacularly.

It also explained everything that was going on with the undead. Everything was to make sure Mariel left the defenses of the Silver Spires so that they could bring their experimentation to the next stage.

It felt good for things to finally make sense.

"Well, yes," Mariel admitted, pausing a moment as she looked at me. Suddenly, she was angry. "You have been lying to me!"

It felt weird to be focused on the anger of a goddess. It felt like a pressure, suffocating and overwhelming ... or, it would have been if it wasn't for my recent experience, of taking down a god. After that, it was more of an interesting glimpse that allowed me to understand the difference between her spark and the necrotic one.

For one, the weight of it felt different. Not heavier, but more shapely, almost theatric, with the components of the light overbearing, while shadows danced ... though even as I thought that, I could sense that it was not the Twilight Spark, but the impressions from the previous form.

It would take a while for the true merger to stabilize. Decades without my help, but even with that, months would be an ambitious target.

I chuckled as I created my own pressure against hers. "Well, I didn't exactly lie. I just didn't mention that I wasn't the leader. Or, are you going to say that my organization hadn't been as strong as I promised? And, I did save your school several times."

"Well ..." Mariel stopped, realizing that, technically it wasn't a lie. I might have implied the existence of a bigger organization, but what I presented wasn't any weaker. It was even stronger. "You lied about your abilities," she said, but the moment she said that I could feel the shift. With her righteous fury robbed, what was left behind was the cute, socially incompetent angel that I was familiar with.

"So did you, unless I missed a long explanation about how you were using two opposing Divine

Sparks in a very delicate balance that could destroy a nice chunk of the plane if you made a mistake.”

“Well, you knew about it,” she said, but her argument lost quite a bit of weight. “And, your secrets were bigger.” However, as she wilted, I could see that her brand-new Divinity wasn’t enough to cure her social ineptitude.

Just like before, where her supposed tough exterior crumbled the moment her true self was revealed. Not to mention, this time, I had the advantage of the memories of last time. She blushed badly, which I took as permission to escalate the satiation into its fun portion.

“Maybe,” I said as I took a step forward without a warning, hugging her. All the critical questions were already answered, and the rest, she was smart enough to deduce. “Now, why don’t we skip a step and you admit the reason you’re acting cranky is you missed me.”

“Never! I could never miss a liar and a cheater like you,” Mariel answered, but her lack of conviction wasn’t hard to see.

She tried to push me away, but considering I didn’t even move an inch despite all her new Divine Might, it was difficult for her to claim that it was a determined push. I chuckled as I watched her move and shuffle, doing her best to create a bigger and more efficient outlook, giving me a chance to push things forward without escalating things any further.

It was a beautiful moment.

“Bastard. Let me go. All that time, no even knowing whether you’re dead or alive... “ she muttered, her already feeble pushes weakening even more.

I could have pushed her, but I waited, her hands slowly settling on my shoulders. “I ... I missed you,” she admitted.

“And I missed you as well, my sexy angel,” I answered, enjoying the suddenness of the blush that crept up her neck. It was good to see her sudden divinity didn’t cure her almost-crippling shyness. Her hands settled on my waist, while mine crossed her body a bit lower, and her wings wrapped around me.

And, whatever else that Twilight Spark triggered, I could say that the impact of it on her wings was beautiful. Her wings had always been soft and warm, but no matter what, there was a sense of sharpness that came from her mana nature.

The light was not exactly forgiving.

Twilight mana, on the other hand, didn't have those edges, making her hug even more comfortable. I could have stayed in this hug forever, but there was only one problem. I had more visceral plans for our meeting.

"Damn, this is comfortable," I murmured, deliberately acting soft, almost lazy. "I would have fallen asleep ... but I'm afraid that you'll molest me in my sleep again."

Just like that, the tenderness of the moment was gone. "J-jerk," she gasped, pushing me back once again, this time much harder, with hands safely on her hips, that didn't work.

"Why, am I lying," I said as I grabbed her hips tighter, squeezing hard enough to earn a moan. One that tempted me for more, so I leaned forward to steal a kiss from her elegant neck. She moaned again. "I distinctly remember your hands getting very adventurous, your hands exploring every part of my body."

"S-stop," she whispered, her blush intense enough to make me worry if it wasn't for her recent rise to Divinity.

"Why, I even remember the spell you cast on me to make sure I stayed asleep, and climbed on top of me with those hips..." I said as I let my hands dance on her ass, enjoying their firmness while she closed her eyes, shame dancing with arousal.

"Then, for some reason, I remember examining your wings, do you remember why," I said, teasing her about the position that followed. Admittedly, even now, I still cherished the memory of her back, her glowing silver wings spread wide as she hesitantly lowered herself and took me inside her for the first time.

"S-stop, please," she gasped shyly. "Please."

"Well, why don't you make me—" I teased her, which was all the goading she needed before she leaned forward, her lips sealing mine.

I liked her method of choice to silence me...

—

{Strength: 115 Charisma: 115

Precision: 115 Perception: 115

Agility: 115 Manipulation: 115

Speed: 115 Intelligence: 151

Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 115}

{Purified Divine Spark: 1.147,577}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Thirteen

I did nothing as Mariel sealed my lips with her searing kiss. I could have taken back control immediately, but after all the harrowing experiences she had gone through, she deserved to get a sense of control.

And, to be honest, the way her wings wrapped around my body was too comfortable to change, even when her fingers grabbed my hair painfully, squeezing helplessly as she ravaged my mouth with her tongue, the two sensations contrasting greatly.

I liked it.

As she continued to drink my lips with the desperation of a traveler lost in a desert, I let my Tantric mana infuse her body, mixing with her mana, finally helping her to quicken the bonding process. Now that I wasn't dancing on the blade's edge, that was much easier.

At the same time, I felt our bond getting stronger, her domain linking with my domains, enhancing the efficiency of my power just as what I had been experiencing with Intelligence and Endurance.

[+1 Wisdom]

[+1 Manipulation]

The double notification was a surprise. Wisdom, I understood more, as, despite all the sharp edges, Light was still tightly linked to life and healing, which linked to Wisdom.

Manipulation was a surprise, mostly because I didn't expect a double boost, but considering that, Darkness and Manipulation weren't exactly a difficult connection to make.

It was surprising, but ultimately, very helpful. Wisdom helped quite a bit when converting Mana natures, particularly when I was fighting against undead or mass healing ... and manipulation was even more useful as it allowed me to shape the mana much more finely.

A combination that would help me greatly ... but rather than thinking about those benefits, I focused on Mariel's hands, which were busy pushing my pants down.

"Someone is impatient," I murmured, fascinated by the expression of desire on her face as lowered herself.

“Shut up. It has been months,” she grumbled shyly as she stood up, while her white robe followed the opposite direction, and pooled around her legs. “Just let me do this ... I have been dreaming it for a while.”

With that, she jumped to my waist, her legs wrapping around my body tightly, just not as tightly as her walls clamping around my girth, enough to make me thankful for my high Endurance.

As she lowered herself ... I had to say, I was a bit disappointed. She was still amazing and beautiful, but the way she said that implied that she had a more interesting idea in mind than a simple position...

Then, her wings rose and fell once, making me swallow those words. She started flying, and since her legs were safely clamped around me, I was dragged along. “I ... I missed flying,” she admitted shyly as we rose to the skies, her hips dancing aggressively in contrast to her wistful tone.

Clearly, flying wasn't the only thing that she missed, but I didn't say anything. I looked at her eyes, enjoying that captivating brightness before I leaned forward to capture her lips, enjoying her taste.

She let out a chain of gasp as she repeatedly impaled herself with my length, while her wings picked up more and more speed. Our flight wasn't exactly comfortable, which was a choice. She could have easily used magic to fly a dozen different ways, but she clearly wanted to rely on her wings, each swing radiating mana as she bonded with her Domain even better.

Not that I was complaining. The jerkiness of our movement made her hip movements even more unpredictable, making our carnal dance more pleasurable as a result. She closed her eyes to enjoy her double sensation, the freedom to finally fly without being hunted mixing with her carnal joy.

And, as her joy rose, her defenses fell, which would have been devastating if I had any ill intent. Luckily for her, I just used the opportunity to hasten her bonding with the plane even more.

[+3 Wisdom]

[+3 Manipulation]

Her eyes stayed closed, her hips rocking wildly as the last scraps of hesitation disappeared. I might have assumed that it was about her new Domain ... but I knew for a fact it was not. Even before, she had shown just how wild she could get once she got going.

“My beautiful goddess,” I whispered.

“B-blasphemy—” she started before freezing. “No, this is not blasphemy, is it?” she muttered, as if she was just realizing the true implication of her transformation.

“No, it is not,” I answered. “With your domain complete, you’re an actual goddess. We just need to find you some worshippers. How do you feel about elves,” I said, enjoying her expression of shock. The following thoughtful expression, less so.

“What elves,” she said.

“Later. I have something more important to do first,” I chuckled as I grabbed her body and twisted until I was behind her, hugging her from behind.

“W-what are you doing,” she gasped, which was all she was able to say as I grabbed her wings, stalling her flight as I started fucking her from behind.

“Riding you properly, of course,” I said with a chuckle.

“I’ll — kill — you,” she gasped, though not at once with her moans ruining her voice as I repeatedly invaded her. I wondered if it was the indignity implied in the act of riding that angered her more, or the fact that I was preventing her flying.

Teasing her like this changed the nature of our earlier romantic mood. However, I didn’t want to stop the fun halfway just because she wanted to stop to think about the unimportant aspects ... like her Divinity.

She would have a lot of time to ponder on that once I left.

I kept holding her wings, using them as leverage to invade her wetness even more aggressively, each moan spectacular even as we fell, the ground coming close with a dangerous speed ... well, calling it dangerous was a touch excessive, as we had a lot of magical methods to slow us down ... and a collusion was hardly dangerous.

Yet, that didn’t change the feeling of danger that we drove from the sensation of diving, mixing incredibly with the carnal side of the pleasure. Just as we were about to hit the ground, I exploded in her and shifted my hand, forcing her to pull before we hit.

Challenging with every inch of her body, including her wings, trembling with pleasure. She slowed down and landed us on a hill, though with a little adjustment so that I was on my back.

“Now, it’s my turn to ride,” she said with a raspy tone while her hips started to dance.

The movement of her hips was amazing, as were her moans that echoed off the empty landscape.

The landscape itself wasn’t as beautiful. Other than the Divine Trees with their silver glow, there wasn’t a lot to look good on the landscape.

While she was busy riding me, I pulled the Twilight Mana around us, creating an emptiness for a moment before I flooded the same area with Nature Mana, triggering the growth, replicating the same trick I had done with the trees.

Without the necessity of carefully balancing it with Mariel’s condition, it was much easier. Just like that, the bare hills turned into beautiful meadows. Mariel might be passionate enough to ignore the ugliness of her domain ... but she certainly appreciated the change.

Showing it by her hips getting even faster, my grunts of pleasure mixing with her moans, her tits dangling beautifully in the prison of my palms with every shake, her silky wetness enveloping my presence deeper and deeper.

“Truly a divine experience,” I said as a chuckle escaped my mouth. She sped up even more, fast enough to kill a man who couldn’t comfortably fight against gods.

“Shut up and fuck me,” she said as she leaned down and kissed me, her hips not skipping even a single beat as she showed her appreciation with her body.

It was the best way to be silenced, her tongue burying itself into my mouth once more as her hips gyrated, her tightness increasing even more while putting every single part of my body on high alert. Her nibbling drove my pleasure even higher.

Soon, her tightness turned into an inescapable prison as she started to shiver, her wings glowing beautifully as she orgasmed, which triggered one of my own as she collapsed against my chest, moaning and gasping.

Her connection with her domain got stronger.

[+3 Wisdom]

[+3 Manipulation]

“I ... I missed you, bastard,” Mariel whispered.

“I missed you too, my sexy angel,” I answered, responding with a kiss, letting her recover.

After all, we still had a plane to repair, and a domain to bond completely ... the fun way.

—

{Strength: 115 Charisma: 115

Precision: 115 Perception: 115

Agility: 115 Manipulation: 122

Speed: 115 Intelligence: 151

Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 122}

{Purified Divine Spark: 1.147,577}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Fourteen

“I can’t believe you’re going already, you bastard,” Mariel said.

“Oh, a month wasn’t enough. A month that we spent wrapped around each other, I might add,” I answered with a chuckle as I kissed her, enjoying her blush.

“That doesn’t count, it was just to repair the plane and seed it with twilight beings,” she answered with a beautiful blush.

“Oh, there was seeding alright,” I said, enjoying the crass joke mostly because of her scandalized expression. She was willing to experiment in some really fascinating positions during the month we spent together, but a little low-brow humor was enough to dismiss and unbalance her successfully.

“S-shut up,” she said even as she blushed.

“Why don’t you make me,” I said, and she did so by slamming her lips against mine, extending another kiss. One that I had to pull back soon, because it was almost time for the beacons to flare, and I wanted to start traveling as soon as possible. “So, a month wasn’t enough,” I said with a chuckle.

“Not even close,” she answered. “Not with all the times that you disappeared to visit your elf whore ...”

“Hey, get along well. You need each other to defend yourself successfully in case the wards I set up get breached,” I warned. It wasn’t too much of a surprise that they didn’t get along well, especially since I couldn’t just arrange a threesome to make things fun. They were bound to their own planes, and avatars were poor substitutes for a threesome.

Luckily, the month wasn’t just a waste. Other than helping the two bond with their planes even stronger, I was also able to break down the artifact the Eternals used to bond the two planes together, enough to replicate its function with a ward before it broke down ... though it did cost me quite a bit of purified spark to constantly replenish the mana.

As a result, the planes ended up getting locked together, which meant they could support each other in case of an attack. Hopefully, it would be enough, especially since they were well-matched against the undead, and I hoped that they would be able to resist any other attack together.

More importantly, Mariel was able to build another darkness ward that somehow hid the planes. It was expensive in terms of mana ... but considering I had integrated a conversion ward to both planes and given them far more mana than they could otherwise use, that didn't matter much.

Of course, leaving some Purified Spark with them was risky. If the Eternals attacked successfully, there was a chance they would be able to acquire some, taking away my strongest advantage.

All things considered, it was a risk I was willing to take.

"Now, one last kiss before I leave," I said, sharing another heated kiss while her naked body rubbed against mine, her wings a blanket around me.

With that, I teleported, once again into the Primordial Aether. And, since I had already said my goodbyes to Seldanna, I moved away from the shadows of it, waiting for the signal from the beacons.

As I waited, I looked around, realizing Primordial Aether didn't feel as chaotic and in comprehensive. It wasn't exactly like the normal world, still a mixture of a haze and a maze, but this time, trying to find my way felt like trying to remember something while drunk.

Out of reach, maybe, but along with the realization that, once the mist of alcohol faded, everything would be clear.

My latest stat increase was certainly convenient.

With that increased capability, the moment I felt the signal of the beacons, I started moving in that direction ... far faster than I had hoped. More importantly, as I traveled, I was able to sense the location of the main material plane. Nothing concrete, just a giant shadow in the mist.

Enough for me to travel the rest of the way even without the beacons, allowing me to complete the rest of the travel in just two days.

I was getting more and more comfortable in Primordial Aether ... which was enough to give me hope.

Once I arrived at my destination, I found it surrounded by Elementals once again, each desperate to invade. I was almost sure that their desperation was about the System ... but exactly how, I had no idea.

I wanted to poke that particular point, but unfortunately, I didn't have too much time.

With my path familiar, sneaking back into the plane and teleporting across had been easy. My first destination was Silver Spires. From a distance, I could see that Silver Spires had gotten far bigger than I expected.

With almost ten times people living directly, and nearby, I could see a few new towns under construction. The change was interesting.

Just not as interesting enough to delay my meeting with Helga. I teleported again...

"Hello, love," I said as I appeared behind Helga, hugging her. I didn't surprise her — I couldn't, not in her domain — but I still managed to hug her from behind.

She twisted in my arms until we were face to face, kissing me aggressively. "I missed you, you bastard," she murmured as she clamped against my lips, not asking a single question as her legs wrapped around my waist.

And, she was supposed to be the Goddess of Knowledge.

How amusing.

Pity I couldn't make that joke to her, not with her lips doing her best to steal all my attention ... and succeeding. I slammed her against the nearest shelf, the books raining on the floor even as I ripped her dress hungrily.

She didn't seem to have any problem with that, considering she was repeating the same action on my dress. As she pulled, I absentmindedly noted that she was stronger physically ... nowhere near me, but enough to match a mediocre fighter.

It was good to see that even a conceptual Spark like Knowledge gave her some improvements. It might help her in a dangerous situation.

More importantly, it would help her be even more active in our private fun times ... a fact she realized as well if the way she crouched down in front of me with great enthusiasm was any indicator.

"Wow, someone is in a hurry," I commented as I watched her kneel down.

"Yes, because I can't keep you for long while there's a civil war going on," Helga said. "Five minutes, then you're going to go to the capital and make sure everything is in order," she

ordered.

“Oh, I love it when you start ordering. Being a goddess suits you,” I said, enjoying her blush ... especially that shy reaction didn’t prevent her from leaning forward to capture my girth between her pouty lips and started giving a blowjob that shocked me with its aggressiveness.

She pulled back once my shaft hit the entrance of her throat and looked up. “What, I missed you,” she said, somehow still shy enough to be cute even as she returned to the task at hand.

Her hands planted behind my thighs as she pulled me forward, giving me the best blowjob I had ever got. Passionate and wild, yet still with a pattern. Almost like a dance.

Suddenly, I smirked. “You used your spark to design everything, like a dance, right?” I declared.

She said nothing, but the sudden pause and the glowing blush showed that I was very accurate. I didn’t say anything else, just enjoying her aggressive yet elegant blowjob in silence, not ruining her beautiful surprise any further.

I just looked down, enjoying her beautiful nude body while she did her best to make my shaft disappear completely in her throat, ignoring the temptation to grab her beautiful blonde locks.

It was her gift. It would be rude to ruin it like that.

I just stayed in place, enjoying as her head bobbed up and down around my hardness. Her eyes stayed open, locked with mine to give me a treat of their blue depths ... depths that shone with supernatural intelligence.

She soon picked up the pace, taking me even deeper down her throat a few times before she stayed there, wrapping my legs ... and gulped, the sudden tightening enough to trigger me. As she choked around my dick, I moaned, filling her throat.

“So, how was it?” she murmured after she swallowed every last drop and pulled back, then proceeded to trace with her finger to catch any of my seed that may have slipped while she was distracted.

“You’re a goddess, indeed,” I murmured as I lifted her up, and pressed a gentle kiss to her cheek. “Pity that I have to go to the capital immediately.”

“Yes, a pity,” she answered while she caressed my chest, then turned and walked away with a very deliberate sway on her hips.

Even as I fixed my clothes and teleported away, I couldn't help but imagine just how else she was going to use her spark in the bedroom. Too bad I had a civil war to navigate before I could get that answer.

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{Strength: 115 Charisma: 115

Precision: 115 Perception: 115

Agility: 115 Manipulation: 122

Speed: 115 Intelligence: 151

Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 122}

{Purified Divine Spark: 1.147,577}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel}

Chapter Three Hundred Fifteen

The moment I arrived at the capital — teleporting nearby and then flying several miles rather than teleporting directly to make sure I stayed unnoticed — I understood why Helga asked me to hurry up. The city was surrounded by a large army, all carrying the personal flags of the second Prince, while the capital sported the flags of the third Prince.

No sign of the crown prince and the fourth prince.

Interesting, I thought even as I mixed into the surrounding army, curious about the exact situation.

A few questions were enough for me to get a general sense of what was going on. Apparently, the crown prince attacked the estate of the fourth prince, triggering a fight that cost the life of the fourth prince. There was some gossip about a lost artifact with no further explanation.

More interestingly, before the crown prince could even return to the capital, he mysteriously disappeared, with the second and third princes blaming each other for assassinating him.

I had a better idea about his fate ... especially since I could detect several Eternal agents moving around in the army, all disguised as ordinary soldiers and servants, though nowhere near as hidden as they believed themselves to be.

There were too many of them to actually be about the capital ... and their role didn't justify them. Giving me a better idea.

The Eternals — at least the group that was using Mariel as an experiment — finally realized the crown prince lost her. I wondered if they killed him.

I hoped not. I preferred to take revenge directly.

A twenty-minute walk around the military camp was enough for me to notice almost thirty Eternal agents, even the weakest above level forty, with decent stats.

It was fascinating just how little I felt threatened by them.

Of course, that was not the only change. Such an opportunity was a chance for the nobles to throw their support behind the winner. The number of the flags showed that the most believed it would be the second prince that would be victorious despite the fact that the third Prince held the capital.

Ultimately, however, I ignored most political nonsense. I didn't care much about who would be the Emperor. Why would I, when I could easily destroy them if they really pushed me.

No, I cared about exactly what the Eternals were doing, and just how many agents they had in the city itself. I needed to sneak in.

I could have easily teleported, but it was almost certain there was a stronger mage that could catch the fluctuations. Teleporting was not exactly subtle, especially since the capital activated its magical protections.

Luckily, I didn't need to wait for long. There had been a sudden magical attack from the army to the city, followed by a regiment attacking to the walls. It was more of a threat than something that could actually work, but it was enough for me to mix with them ... then, change into the colors of the defending army.

Things were much easier with my improved stats.

The capital was a mess. People looked shocked, angry, and hungry. And, while I pitied them, I couldn't do anything.

Not with the number of Eternal agents I could count, their numbers increasing as I got closer to my blacksmith. Not exactly good news, especially since the increase was too significant to be coincidental.

Once I arrived, I found a dozen of them surrounding the blacksmith, along with a regiment from the royal army. The wards were activated.

More importantly, from such a close range, I could finally feel a presence, one that was familiar despite all the differences, reminding me of flames, forges ... and chains.

Oeyne was here.

I used one of the secret entrances I prepared to sneak inside, soon arriving at the garden. Not too far away from me, there was a group of higher-ranking apprentices I talked was speaking. "Enough of this nonsense. I beg your leave to depart from our usual agenda and for once, think clearly. We have an opportunity here. Let's use it."

There were fifteen of them. Some of them nodded at the declaration. A few muttered things under their breath. The speaker ignored them, clearly treating this as an opportunity.

“What, support the second prince. After he betrayed our master. No, we need to take down the wards and join the third prince. With all the weapons we have in storage, they have a chance to change the tides of war. We will be heroes, and not betray our master.”

“Why do we care about a dead man,” the speaker responded, clearly comfortable before crowds. Yet, I would have ignored it if it wasn’t for one thing.

He was another Eternal agent, his soul space making it clear, making me wonder exactly what his plan was. Not the siege, certainly.

Probably Oeyne’s presence.

Well, it was in vain to hope that Oeyne could actually sneak in without being noticed. She was hardly the subtlest person imaginable. I had been hoping that she was someone else with her that could guide her somewhat, but that turned out to be not the case.

At least, it wasn’t as bad as it could be. I would have been far more afraid before my latest trip ... but now, not only do I have the necessary stats to be confident in escaping, but also the Twilight Spark to generate darkness mana as necessary — at least its hiding function.

However, I still walked around, them, disguised as an ordinary servant, keeping an eye on their discussion. Just because I could escape didn’t mean I wanted a chase. I rather disappear easily. Or at least, understand what was going on.

So, I watched as he continued to unroll his speech, talking about the direness of their situation and how it was important to allow the second prince to the capital. However, as he spoke, I could see exactly where he was looking.

Inside the main building, where Oeyne was.

Their plan wasn’t particularly complicated. They were either aware of Oeyne from the beginning, or noticed her once she started moving toward the capital. However, rather than capturing her, they followed, hoping clearly that she would lead them to Mariel.

And, since no one tried to contact her, they started acting in a way that hoped to force our hand without revealing their presence.

A good plan. Too bad they relied on a bunch of wildly inaccurate assumptions.

I cast a detection spell, targeting Oeyne’s surroundings. The first thing I noticed was several

detection wards around her, ready to catch any kind of magical communication to alert her minders, but they missed one thing.

They linked their spells to the main ward. It would have been a good idea if they could decipher the tricks buried in it ... but with their reliance on the skills, there was no chance for them to understand even a fraction of the structure I had developed together with Helga.

Just like that, their web of detection fell into my hands, giving me all the information I needed while depriving of them the same.

While the spy continued to give his speech, I examined Oeyne. She was healthy and moving. She was currently in one of the private forges, crafting an exquisite dagger, far better than anything she could earlier, magic and metal shaping under her will.

She was utterly relaxed, clearly unaware that she had four Eternal assassins ready to intervene, and a team of twenty not too far away.

Clearly, after losing Mariel due to their desire to maintain deniability, they were determined not to repeat that mistake.

I almost pitied them. Their numbers might have represented a challenge before. But right now, on my home turf.

The speech went on, but I left it behind and moved forward, easily keeping myself hidden both from the curious eyes, and their magical detection methods. Soon, I was in the same room as Oeyne, the sight of her dusky skin covered with sweat as her hammer danced rapidly.

I wanted to hug her immediately, but before, there were things that needed to be done.

First, I created a new ward for the room, one that would not only block any curious magical detection spells, but also fake the result to show Oeyne was still alone and forging. I didn't want to be interrupted.

Second, I cast a diagnosis spell on her, checking her soul space. Just like I expected, her System was gone, replaced by a new Divine Spark, one that could easily be defined as Forging. She was in the process of bonding with it, but she was still somewhere between the demigod and goddess stages.

Still, her status was stable, there was no danger ... and our privacy was assured.

A perfect reunion.

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{Strength: 115 Charisma: 115

Precision: 115 Perception: 115

Agility: 115 Manipulation: 122

Speed: 115 Intelligence: 151

Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 122}

{Purified Divine Spark: 1.147,577}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel}

Chapter Three Hundred Sixteen

I decided to greet Oeyne in a fun way. A wave of my hand, and the mana gathered around her, which rushed into the metal lying around her, turning into chains to clamp around her arms and legs.

I was ready to stop if she actually panicked, but her response surprised me. "Finally, you're here," she simply said, showing that she was very quick to recognize me.

"Wow, what was quick recognition," I said as I chuckled, approaching even as I made the chains turn her toward me, enjoying her beautiful face. She said nothing, just opened her mouth happily as I kissed her, her arms still immobile.

"I recognize that shoddy technique to bypass the need for proper forging everywhere," she said, her smile cheeky.

"Oh, really," I said as my hands slipped to her hips, enjoying the way her expression shifted as she caressed her ass through her leather pants. "Someone is looking for another reason to be punished."

"A-another," she stammered, surprised at the statement. "What do you mean, another reason?"

"Well, you didn't realize the Eternals are using you as bait for their trap. I think that deserves proper punishment, don't you think?"

At first, a flash of panic went through her face, but the moment I tightened the chains around her body, the flash disappeared just as quickly. She recognized that, if I could feel free to tease her, it couldn't be too serious. "Yes, punish me," she whispered. "I deserve it."

"Whatever I want?" I asked.

"Whatever you want..." she responded, her voice begging for it.

"Good," I said as I waved my hand, and suddenly, her chains melted, and she ended up on her knees ... a great loss, considering her physical abilities were much greater compared to the amount she had when she still had the System.

Her own form of spark seemed to be improving her physical capabilities far more than I expected.

“W-what,” she stammered, shocked.

“Since you’re happy with any punishment, you don’t mind waiting until we deal with the Eternals, do we,” I said as I presented my hand to help her stand up.

She slapped it away. “You’re a right bastard, you know that, right?” she grumbled, her frustration only made me chuckle more. It was amusing to see Oeyne focus more on her pleasure than the danger ... but hardly surprising.

Oeyne was an excellent, passionate blacksmith, but apart from that, she only had her pleasures. Those pleasures were only gambling and alcohol before we met, and sex was added after — no doubt because she never had someone who could properly dominate her as she enjoyed.

Ultimately, however, she had very little concerns about the strategic aspects of the world ... so, even the mention of an Eternal trap didn’t faze her. She was clearly happy to take clues from me without even questioning the exact status.

A dangerous combination of trust and carelessness.

No wonder the Eternals were able to find her.

“So, tell me everything that happened,” I said, happy that, finally, I had a choice to question someone about the events of the attack. Helga and Mariel were unable to answer that question since both had been unconscious due to the situation.

“Should I start from the battle,” she asked. I nodded, and she started giving an extended breakdown of the battle itself. Apparently,, Mariel had displayed a very effective battle performance before she had been taken down by a mysterious artifact and disappeared ... which was probably used by the crown prince.

Helga had fallen about the same time, while she was trying to build a ward to defend them.

“Then, the princess dragged her away, but I wasn’t able to pay much attention, because it was when I felt some kind of energy flooding me. It felt weird, like the satisfaction of completing a very complicated set of armor ... but at the same time, flames of a volcano.”

“The technical term is Divine Spark,” I cut in.

“Sounds fancy,” she answered. “Anyway, as that hit me, I felt distracted for a moment and lost connection with the System, but for some reason, I got even stronger.”

"I'm guessing it wasn't enough," I suggested.

"No, not even close. The enemy was simply too crowded. I was near the walls, and I managed to get away, but it was a close call," she said.

"Any idea about the rest?" I asked.

"Some of them," she said. "I saw the librarian getting captured by a few robed figures, but before I could go help her, they teleported. I don't have a clue who they are, though."

"Most likely the Eternals," I answered. "And, even if they are not responsible, I'm sure they know who. The other?"

"I remember seeing the princess on top of an emerald dragon, but when the same robed figures appeared them, they disappeared through a multicolored gate..." Oeyne explained.

Not exactly bad news, as it implied they were able to avoid being captured. The problem, I had absolutely no idea where they might have been.

The princess had the ability to conceal herself with Darkness Spark, and Janelor was a dragon with the ability to travel through the Primordial Aether unaided.

They might be anywhere, and I had no clue.

"How about Cornelia and Marianne," I asked, knowing that she was familiar with them thanks to Helga keeping everyone connected after my disappearance.

"They, I have no idea," Oeyne answered. "Marianne, I don't have the slightest clue ... but I remember seeing some kind of battle where one side had been using a lot of flame attacks. However, before I could go there, it had been gone, leaving behind a scorched waste."

I asked several follow-up questions about the situations, but unfortunately, Oeyne was not a mage, and the information she could provide was extremely limited in this context, even with all the follow-up questions that we asked.

"I think this is the best we could get," I finally admitted as I stepped asking questions and waved my hand, creating a large couch to sit on. There was no point pushing Oeyne with too many questions and ruining our reunion. Ultimately, she confirmed that Janelor and the princess were likely in good condition, and gave a clue about the potential location of Titania. Combined with her own safety, it was far better than I could have hoped.

It was frustrating not to have any clue about my lovely healer and angry fire mage, but at least, even with our connection diminished, I could feel that they were alive ... just like I could feel Aviada was still alive.

Not ideal, but still far better than some of my fears.

I sat down on the couch I conjured, and Oeyne followed, hugging me tightly. "So, what's the plan now?" she asked.

"We need to stay here a while and understand the plans of the agents around us. For now, they seem to be happy to stay in the background while searching."

"But why?" Oeyne asked. "They are so strong already. What exactly could force such a strong organization to stay on the defensive?"

"The other members of the same organization, of course," I answered. "It's clear that not all of them are willing to support whatever experiment that was going on with Mariel. It can be to our advantage."

"How exactly?" Oeyne asked as she hugged me even tighter, showing that she was less concerned about my answer, and more about enjoying our closeness ... a bit too much, even, her body rubbing against mine subtly yet steadily.

I acted like I didn't notice her 'subtle' trick.

"We're going to force their hand," I said. "I'm going to leave —" I started, and her arms immediately tightened, and returned to the town officially, acting like I had managed to get away from the hands of the fourth prince. Since one of their agents is already talking about going to the side of the second prince, it'll give me an excuse to deal with them."

"Interesting," Oeyne answered, which was hardly a compliment, considering her expression was already getting glazed, and one of her hands sneaked down her shirt under her leather apron, unbuttoning her shirt.

Somehow I thought that she was being subtle. No wonder the Eternals easily found her after her escape.

"I know. Challenging them directly has some dangers, but it'll work. Though, maybe I should just go and challenge them one by one to show them my power," I followed up, deliberately giving a nonsense answer.

“Whatever you think is the best,” she said as she pulled her hand under her apron, her dusky caramel cleavage looking far more alluring.

Under different circumstances, I would have punished her even worse ... but after such a long separation, I decided to be merciful.

“You’re really pushing your luck,” I said as I grabbed her hair, pulling hard.

She just moaned enthusiastically, and I sealed her lips with another kiss...

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{Strength: 115 Charisma: 115

Precision: 115 Perception: 115

Agility: 115 Manipulation: 122

Speed: 115 Intelligence: 151

Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 122}

{Purified Divine Spark: 1.147,577}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel}

Chapter Three Hundred Seventeen

Oeyne moaned into my mouth as I kissed her aggressively, giving her exactly what she needed. I was tempted to quicken her bonding process with her Divine Spark, but after a momentary consideration, I decided against it.

I wasn't entirely sure about the full range of methods the Eternals possessed, and I wasn't ready to reveal my hand to improve Oeyne's merging while she was holding a position where she could be easily caught.

So, instead of staying focused on the magical side of things, I focused on the physical aspects of our fun. Another flare of mana, and her hands were bound behind her. She tried to break them ... but even with her increased strength, they didn't budge.

There were benefits to near-infinite mana.

"Oh, don't tell me great Oeyne is afraid of a little magic," I teased her between kisses, knowing she enjoyed the mocking just as much as her helpless position.

"Coward. Why don't you show me exactly what you're capable of," she answered, already getting in the mood.

"As long as you can handle a little pain," I said with a chuckle as I tightened the hold even more even as I grabbed her leather apron, ripping it as easily as it was paper, leaving her only wearing her shirt ... a shirt she had already unbuttoned, revealing her beautiful breasts.

"Bring it on—" she moaned, which was interrupted by a slap to her beautiful breasts, making her moan desperately.

"Oh, that's it? A little pain, and you're not even able to finish your sentence," I mocked, even though I was very much aware it was not the pain that made her pain ... well, at least not directly.

"Arrogant bastard —" she moaned, once again interrupted by another moan, this time by a twist of her nipple leaving her equally helpless. Fascinatingly beautiful, almost as beautiful as the pained gasp that followed when I forced her off the couch and onto her knees without a warning, her magical chains extending to her legs to make sure she couldn't get free.

She tried to free herself, but no matter how strong her new Divine Spark-enhanced body was, it wasn't enough to break through my magical restraints with physical force.

I let her struggle as I conjured a blade, carefully cutting every piece of clothing she wore while she struggled against the bindings, each helpless moment making her turn even more desperate and aroused.

“Feel free to beg for help if you’re feeling distressed. I’m sure someone will bother to save you,” I teased.

“Never,” she whispered back throatily. “If I’m defeated, I deserve my punishment.”

I chuckled as I grabbed her chin, and raised her head. “You deserve it indeed,” I said as I kissed her once again, enjoying the way her tongue danced ... getting more and more desperate each second, clearly wanting me to continue. “Maybe I should leave you like this and leave. A day or two like this should be an excellent punishment.”

“N-no,” she said, shivering in real fear, clearly not ready for it. Certainly not after such a long time apart. “Please.”

Luckily for her, I had no intention of doing that either. It would simply be mean. “Why don’t you show me exactly what are you willing to do to get away from it, then,” I said as I pushed down my pants, revealing my erection.

“Whatever you want—” she started, only to be interrupted again, this time physically as I pushed forward hard enough to invade her throat. Happy with the sudden interruption, her tongue danced even as I grabbed her head, assisting her with the movement of her head, each push bringing her closer to a climax with a shocking rapid speed.

Her happiness with the rough treatment was obvious from the way her tongue danced despite the challenging situation, swirling around my girth repeatedly. It earned a grunt from me even as my hand tightened around her hair. She hadn’t bothered to shape it up while forging, keeping it in a simple ponytail, which allowed me to pull it easily to use it as a handle.

Her beautiful bosom heaved repeatedly as I invaded her throat mercilessly, going deeper and deeper into her throat. “Divinity suits you,” I said even as I felt our connection getting stronger once more ... and this time without an external System as a bridge.

Though, I could feel that there was a difference between her connection and the others, it was merely a flicker compared to the bonfire of the others.

The reason wasn’t hard to discover. Her power. She didn’t even properly complete the first step to Godhood, let alone actually establish her domain ... and the difference from it was incredibly

different.

Even as I enjoyed her throat, I wondered what would be the better choice for her. A domain that was similar to Helga's, where she could just focus on her craft with little responsibility or a full domain.

However, as I looked down, watching her enthusiastic expression, and compared it to earlier where I discussed the potential strategies against the Eternals, the answer was clear.

A small domain was the best for her ... and even then, I was afraid that I would still be the one to truly manage the other blacksmiths. Luckily, unlike Helga, whose Spark was very difficult conceptually, Oeyne's Spark of Forging was ... for the lack of a better term, straightforward.

With that small challenge resolved, I decided to turn my attention to the next stage. I continued to push forward, invading her throat as she choked and gagged, enjoying her punishment.

She was magnificent.

"That's enough playing," I suddenly said as I lifted her and threw her on the couch, her face burying against the soft surface, her plump ass ready for my attention. And, since her arms were still bound behind her, I had a perfect leverage to hold.

"Yes, fuck me," she moaned immediately ... once again pushing her luck. She was lucky that I missed her after such an extended forced separation.

I grabbed her bound hands with one hand, and put the other on her hips, enjoying her excited shivers. It was good to see I wasn't the only one that missed her.

I sank down slowly, enjoying her naked wetness as she clamped around. "Oh, I missed you," I whispered as I disappeared halfway inside. With her face buried, I wasn't able to see her face, but I didn't need that to read her reaction ... particularly her charged moan.

"I missed you as well—" she tried to respond, but I chose that moment to bury myself even deeper. I rather have her moans showing me just how much she missed me. They were far more honest. She just moaned, her voice thick with desire.

My own grunts mixed with her moans, and soon, another instrument joined the mix. My hand, landing on her ass, spanking repeatedly...

It was a good feeling, to ping her down to let our bodies get familiar once more, impaling like a

steady warrior. She didn't say anything, already too far gone in pleasure, her moans trembling, her breathing uneven.

A few more seconds, and she climaxed.

However, that didn't make me stop. On the contrary, I was able to push even more. Her expression twisted with pleasure, but despite her overwhelming pleasure, she was able to handle it easily.

Understandable, as forging was traditionally connected with long hours of work, which came with the advantage of endurance. Not as much as the other benefits, but still enough to allow her to resist the overwhelming pleasure.

"Oeyne, are you sure you don't need rest. You look exhausted," I said, teasing her even as I drilled her aggressively.

"N-not at all. Feel free to continue," she said, unable to keep her voice from trembling. After all, enduring the endless pleasure was one thing, but hiding the impact of it was something else.

"Good, then you don't mind discussing our plans for the future," I said, not even slowing down as I pushed her toward another climax.

"O-of course not," she answered. Her answer didn't surprise me, as she had always been stubborn.

"Good..." I said, and started giving her a very lengthy explanation about Divine Domains and how they could be established. Not exactly a simple topic to understand even under the best of circumstances ... but the fact I continued to drill her without a pause all the while made it even more challenging. "You understood that, right?" I said.

"O-of course," she whispered, her voice more certain than I expected ... but then I realized that I might have been mistaken about the improvement from her status, somewhere between Demigod and a Goddess, and unlike Mariel that had been fighting to contain it, she had no problem.

Helga had problems as well, but considering her irregular type of spark, it was easier to guess exactly what had gone wrong.

It gave me hope about Cornelia, Marianne, and Titania, as all three had standard skill load-

outs, similar to Oeyne.

“Since you understand the choice you have in front of you, I can leave and start on the other parts of the plan. I hope it’s alright,” I said.

Only for her legs to wrap around me. “Not before you finish what you started,” she said, wrapping her legs around me.

“As you wish,” I chuckled.

After all, I still had several minutes ... or hours, I corrected as I looked at her expression, as determined as it was euphoric.

—

{Strength: 115 Charisma: 115

Precision: 115 Perception: 115

Agility: 115 Manipulation: 122

Speed: 115 Intelligence: 151

Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 122}

{Purified Divine Spark: 1.147,577}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge}

Chapter Three Hundred Eighteen

When I left the city, the general lines of a plan were already formed in my mind. The plan was more aggressive than I would have liked, but what I had learned from Oeyne, particularly about Titania's capture, hastened my plans.

I needed to find a way to reach the base of the Eternals as soon as possible.

An intimidating target, but luckily, not particularly impossible. The city was already teeming with the Eternal agents, unaware that they had been discovered, which gave me a lot of targets to follow once things started to heat up ... and the civil war made it far easier to trigger the chaos.

A civil war that my fake identity was already involved, thanks to the annoying habit of the princes trying to turn everything into a resource for their battle for the throne.

All I needed was to decide the size of the chaos I wanted to trigger. I could act tame, sneak into the capital, and start making small and suspicious moves from my base. It was not a bad plan.

It would have been one I would have picked if it wasn't for the latest power-up I had received thanks to the necrotic god I had dealt with, more than doubling all my stats in the process. With the security blanket it provided, I had the option to be more daring.

Especially since I had already removed Oeyne from her room and moved her down the base I had created under the base, trying to get familiar with her new Divine Domain. It didn't take her to decide to set up a base under the Capital, finding the tradeoff of limited movement underground a fair trade for improvement.

And, now, she was happily forging me an army of intricate armors that I could animate with magic, far more intricate and effective than I had used to trick the Necrotic god.

As she established her domain, I received my own rewards. A burst of new forging insights through our connection ... and Stats.

[+9 Precision]

Eternals were not aware of that strategic development, as I created a fake body to stay at the surface and trick the Eternals.

I even allowed that fake body to level up to make sure the trickery would hold against some

basic magical probes. Now that I had access to Darkness mana through my connection with Mariel, I could put the fake body trick of the Princess to good strategic use.

Oeyne was safe ... but they still thought that they had leverage against me after all the trouble I had gone to communicate with her secretly.

It was time for the civil war to have a third competitor, one that would put the Eternals on high alert.

For that, I moved to the hill, one that had the ruins of the fourth prince's residence, where I had joined for a party. It was deserted, and already in ruins, but I didn't care about the quality. What I cared about was it gave me an excuse to appear after such a long absence ... and close enough to be visible.

"I AM FREE! NOW, THE ROYAL FAMILY WILL PAY FOR THEIR BETRAYAL!"

What I let out was a magically enhanced shout, one that was the inferior version of the trick I had used when I was trying to summon elves back into the capital. A shout that echoed Divine Spark slightly.

Naturally, the Divine Spark I chose to use was light.

They wanted Mariel. And I wanted to give them a clue about her, one that would be enough for them to focus on. I let a surge of mana follow that initial burst, made of pure light, turning into a sky beam that would be enough to get the attention of everyone in the capital.

And, while my enemies could start deciding what to do, I decided to start working.

Experimenting was fun, I decided even as I raised a hammer made of solid light ... and used it to rapidly forge a large sheet of metal ... then another, until I had replaced the ruins of the mansion with a castle made of light-infused metal.

Then moved on to forge a series of ballistas, each forged from metal, and required no ammo, working on Light Mana.

It was a devastating combination. Supplying enough mana was the only challenge ... and since I was trying to convince the Eternals that Mariel was with me, it was even an advantage. The design was intricate and complicated, and if it wasn't for my connections, which allowed both Helga and Oeyne to help me, it would have taken weeks to come up with a design.

With Helga solving the magical challenges and Oeyne dealing with the forging aspects, it took only minutes. As for the light projectiles, I didn't even need Mariel's help. They were rather simplistic.

But very effective.

I had been forging my independent weapons, very visibly, right on top of the forge, as I wanted to make a point about both my skills and my Divine Spark, like an arrogant Demigod drunk in his own power.

That was not accidental. I was doing everything to convince the Eternals that I was a rash, direct individual, driven by revenge despite my recent power-up.

While I had planned if they suddenly decided to attack me with their full might, I would prefer if they tried to manipulate me for a while, which would finally allow me to get an invitation.

I still didn't dare to follow them back to their base directly, afraid of the possible magical defenses they had in place.

I might not agree with their political aspirations ... or basic human decency; but there was no arguing about their incredible magical capabilities. Even with my capabilities, trying to sneak into their base directly was the last option.

Letting them bring me in was the better option. As a guest.

Or as a prisoner.

I had already finished forging all the ballistas, and was currently forging a huge leg, when I saw the first movement. A large group of mounted soldiers, rushed toward me. "Stop, in the name of the Empire. You're under arrest —" the commander started.

Which was all he was able to say as I triggered one of the ballistas remotely, and he disappeared under a bolt of brightness.

Light mana was spectacular when it came to destructiveness.

"Attack him, before he can recharge his weapon," one of the soldiers shouted. Not a ranking one, and more importantly, he was retreating even as he declared that. An interesting choice ... one that turned even more interesting once I caught the fact that he was both too fast and too smooth to be an ordinary soldier.

I suspected that he was an Eternal spy, and decided to check ... in a different way than I used. Instead of checking his soul space, I attacked him with another ballista. He dodged.

I attacked him two at the same time. He dodged one, but another hit.

He survived.

I attacked with three more. This time, already wounded, he failed to dodge any of them. And, three bolts were enough to slay him. But, his incredible performance was telling enough. With his performance, he deserved to be a bodyguard for the prince. There was no way he could be just an ordinary soldier.

A spy.

It was an excellent way to catch one.

Ironically, the fact that it took so long to kill him encouraged the other soldiers to attack me. From their perspective, I had to struggle to kill a low-level soldier, which gave them confidence for victory. Not something I intended, but also not something I was complaining about.

The large squad attacked me, confident in their victory, which only lasted until I took down their commander and the other three ranking officers. "Run, he's too strong!" the soldiers shouted and dispersed. I let them go. I didn't want to kill ordinary soldiers.

And, as they escaped, they would spread the news of my arrival, which also worked to my benefit. I wanted a commotion. I chuckled as I finished forging the other legs, and soon, I had a walking fortress, steadily moving closer to the capital. Enough to truly scare the princes, but it was just a side effect.

I wanted the Eternals, particularly that angel with the corrupted divine spark, to come for me, and my fortress gave me an excuse to fight against ordinary Eternal agents even if they suppressed the System once again, but it wasn't strong enough to actually take an angelic demigod, certainly not one with two Divine Sparks.

Hopefully, that fact would be enough for him to come down.

I had a revenge to complete.

—

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{Purified Divine Spark: 1.147,577}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge}

Chapter Three Hundred Nineteen

“The royal family will pay for their betrayal!” I shouted repeatedly as I moved toward the castle, doing my absolute best to look like a reckless man hellbent on revenge, overestimating himself after an intense power-up.

Also, I wanted them to have no doubt about my intentions. I didn’t want the princes trying to take my allegiance. It might have been useful under different circumstances. Now, I wanted to make a show.

My repeated, magically enhanced shouts worked just as I wished. “Attack, for the name of the prince,” The shouts exploded as I moved over the hill, and I saw a significant part of the army stop the siege and line against me.

It was a chance for the forces at the castle to break the siege, but they didn’t take the opportunity, and just watched. What I intended.

As the army attacked, I repeated the trick I had used against the earlier squad, exclusively targeting the nobles and commanders among them, and attacking the commoners only when they got too close. “I have no problem with the common people. Retreat, and I won’t harm you,” I shouted even as I continued to pick off the nobles.

Morale was an interesting thing. Extremely useful, but fragile. Especially when the nobles were not just morally superior, but also physically. Not only they were better armored and had magical protections, but also they simply had higher stats and HP.

And, seeing their vaunted leaders disappearing with just one hit, their morale shattered, and they started running away. However, I could also see a lot of minor nobles mixed in the wave. Just like that, the army had stopped being a threat, while the prince and the bodyguards retreated into the city.

It looked like the prince didn’t care about the crown as much as his life.

I didn’t really care about him while I positioned myself in front of the capital, and started attacking the walls steadily, creating a show. The magical defenses of the capital were no joke. After all, it was a reason the second prince didn’t assault the capital, and was trying to break the morale instead.

Even against the constant barrage of light mana, the wards stood strong. Even with the intense

assault that my new toy couldn't sustain for long, it would take weeks, maybe even months to take down the wards.

Which was why it was good that all was just to make the Eternals take the bait. Not only did my near-endless usage of light mana suggest I had an external source for it, which they would assume to be Mariel, but also it would help them to assume Mariel was still wounded or unconscious, making it a perfect time to catch her.

After all, if that hadn't been the case, why would she not stop my extremely showy siege.

Of course, I wasn't betting only that. Attacking the capital in such a visible manner was showy, showy enough to be noticed by all Eternals, and not just the group that had been doing their best to be sneaky, forcing their hands further.

And, just like what I expected, they reacted by the most obvious tactic. They took Oeyne prisoner. Well, they took the mana clone I had left in her place prisoner. She was happily forging and experimenting in the secret base while the clone was already ambushed and captured by the Agents they had placed in the forge.

To my surprise, they didn't bring the clone to the walls to threaten me, but instead, brought her away, before a magical message was delivered to me, saying that they had imprisoned Oeyne, and I had to come to them if I didn't want her to die.

It was a simple threat, but an effective one. After all, they knew I had gone a a lot of trouble just to send her a message, making her a good hostage. I was glad for it, because it gave me an excuse to pull back. "How dare you threaten her, you cowards," I shouted as I sent another salvo of attacks before I started to retreat, acting like I blamed the royal family for it.

Soon, I was at the ruins of the mansion, where I had been invited. A good location, I have to admit. The number of new wards — subtle enough to avoid the notice of a blacksmith — showed that they were prepared for it.

I could see about fifty people, but I could count another two hundred, hidden. It looked like they had pulled all the eternal agents forward. However, what I really wanted, that corrupted angel, was not there. "Let her go, or I'll kill all of you," I said as I moved forward in my walking fortress without attacking.

They didn't do anything even though it brought them in range, and confident in their wards. "Surrender if you don't want her to die," one of them shouted. I recognized him as the one who had been trying to create a rebellion back in the forge.

He must be a ranking one. An amusing coincidence. "You're angering me," I said, but I didn't attack them. After all, they were keeping Oeyne prisoner. "You don't want to see me when I'm angry."

"Really, what would you do," he said.

"Let me show what I can really do, and maybe, we can have a talk," I said even as I started firing all of my ballistas to empty locations. Presumably, to intimidate them. However, one of those attacks, in a display of complete coincidence and nothing more, hit a critical node, creating a malfunction in the hidden wards.

I could sense their mages reacting immediately to repair, but they weren't too alarmed. After all, from their perspective, it was nothing more than a lucky shot. Actually calculating in real time would require a true genius. And repeating it while it was being repaired would require even more.

A goddess of knowledge.

I sent a mental note of thanks to Helga as she shared the exact three nodes I needed to hit to create a catastrophic failure in the wards. I followed it, and their hidden wards exploded, the backlash killing their mages.

The best part, it didn't have any visible impact, allowing me to act unaware even as their amazing preparations were wasted, taking down a lot of their mages in the process. "Scared now?" I asked as I continued to move, like I assumed their sudden panic was about the explosiveness of my attack. "Leave my love alone, and I'll not even bother killing you as you deserve for touching her!" I shouted, one that gave an excuse for my recklessness.

"We can still talk," he offered. "We're not here to hurt any of you, but to offer a membership to the true protectors of the land," he said.

"Oh, the Eternals. The ones that had been arranging the deaths of the millions for their power," I said, enjoying their sudden shift of expression. "Oh, yes. I know all about the true face of your gutless organization," I said.

I noticed them setting a subtle teleportation array around Oeyne-clone, clearly prioritizing her safety over their other agents. Understandable, as she was a valuable hostage, and pulling her away would give them a chance to extend those talks.

"You can't trust the words of a jealous prince, pouting just because we denied him the chance

to join our glorious organization,” he said, though the way his mocking was exaggerated was clearly intentional. They were trying to probe the source of my information.

I was more than happy to give him one that would hopefully give me what I truly wanted. “A prince?” I scoffed loudly. “Like I would care about his words. No, I had been chosen by the true divinity. A beautiful angel had spoken to me, telling the truth about your cursed organization. I would die before joining an organization consorting with the monsters and the dead.”

He paused a moment, though it was obvious that he had been magically communicating with his leader. Excellent. “And, what if I tell you that we’re the chosen of the true divinity, and you are the one that had been lied to.”

“Unless you have another angel that will come and tell me that I’m lying, it won’t work,” I said.

“Well,” he said, and suddenly, a glow appeared at their center. It was a mere teleportation spell, but there were a lot of spells cast by other mages to turn into a show. Admittedly, a good show. Then, a familiar angel appeared.

“I’m here to tell you the truth, my son —” he started, only to be interrupted by a barrage of light bolts. The reason was simple. I could have allied with him, but the first thing he would ask would be to bring me to Mariel ... and faking a goddess wasn’t as simple.

And, I still needed to pay him back.

—

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Agility: 115 Manipulation: 122

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{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge}

Chapter Three Hundred Twenty

“What are you doing!” the yet-to-be-named angel shouted. The moment he did, I could see some kind of black corruption spreading through his wings.

“Destroying an abomination,” I shouted back, doing my best to lean on the worst aspects of a Light Spark. Direct to the point of recklessness, confident to the point of zealotry. After all, my current identity had already achieved its greatest mission, and it was time for it to die.

“So be it,” he shouted, the dark corruption spreading even more.

This time, I was too familiar with the Divine Sparks to miss their conflicting nature. His conflict was between Darkness and Light, similar to Mariel’s challenge. Well, somewhat. His Light Spark felt similar, but the Darkness spark he used felt different.

The one that the princess used was calm, and soft, like a shadow. His Darkness spark was bright, angry, and changed. I could sense that it was somewhat forced to shift its nature. My guess was that he did so to counter his Spark.

His rain of attacks, a mixture of dark and light, came even stronger than I expected, making me glad that he was barely a demigod. I would have hated him to fight if he completed it.

While Mariel’s unique brand of Spark, which I termed Twilight Spark, had brought some unique advantages, its destructive capabilities came mostly from its Light aspect.

It wasn’t true for my enemy. His brand of Darkness Spark was almost a weird reflection of Light Spark, with a sense of destructive capability to match it. They weren’t blended, but balanced, even the slightest touch enough to send the balance careening.

A dangerous path. I didn’t want to imagine just how much of a nightmare to fight against him if he was an actual god. With the combination, he would have a good chance of winning against the other gods even as a mere avatar. His concept of destruction was just that good.

Luckily, in his demigod state, he was far more busy trying not to kill himself, making him a much more easy enemy. If I didn’t need him to find the base of the Eternals, I would have killed him easily. Instead, I defended his attacks in the worst way possible, and took his attack with my walking castle.

And channeled the resulting explosion to kill half of his men, and used the opportunity to mark several with some very obscure beacons that would start signaling a while later, somewhat

similar to the working principles of the beacons we designed for Primordial Aether.

I didn't expect that to lead me to the real base. The soldiers would probably be transferred to a sub-base, but my bet was that it would go unnoticed, especially since, for all intents and purposes, they were on a secret mission, and would be trying to cover it up.

Of course, that wasn't my only trick. Oeyne clone was another. I had been hoping that, once I 'died' her value as bait would be gone, and they would imprison her again, ideally in the same base they held Titania.

"Is this all you can do, ugly abomination," I shouted. In response, I received a primal shout that surprised me with its intensity. He didn't seem to appreciate an insult to his physical features. His response was an even bigger wave of bolts, each hit destroying bigger chunks of my castle.

He was playing right into my hand.

While I already had two baits, one that led to a potential barracks, and one to a prison, I still needed a third one. One that would lead to his secret sanctum ... which definitely existed. Keeping the two different Divine Sparks was a very dangerous process, the kind that any disruption would be deadly. Combined with its relatively hidden nature, I had no doubt that he had a nice base that no one else knew just for balance.

I just needed to give him a reason to use it.

As he attacked once again, the castle had already turned into a rubble. I triggered an explosion, using the opportunity to fake my death ... but not before sending a blade of concentrated light, far too fast and intense for him to react.

And severing his wing.

His cry of pain was a balm to my soul. His reaction was intense ... which was understandable. I had been with Mariel enough to know that their wings were bound to their existence even tighter than the rest of their bodies. Cutting off his arm would have been less painful.

As he collapsed, trying to contain the sudden disorder of Darkness and Light in his body, I wrapped myself with a Darkness cloak and moved forward ... and forced a link with the Spark remnants in his wing.

One that would allow me to follow him to his base.

Then, I retreated before someone could notice my presence. My reckless last stand had come to an end, and another infiltration mission was about to begin.

Only after I moved a distance away from the battlefield, I teleported back to the capital. Or, more accurately, right under the capital, next to Oeyne.

“Is it done?” she asked as she hugged me, clearly worried. I didn’t blame her, considering my last encounter with that angel. I ended up lost in Primordial Aether.

“Almost. Currently, they are kidnapping your double. Others had already teleported away. I could sense their location...” I added, then paused. “In the sky.”

“On a mountain or something?” she asked.

“No, right at the sky,” I said with a frown. “And, their locations are too far apart. Either they have several flying locations that are moving in perfect harmony...” I murmured.

“Or their base is far bigger than we expected,” she added.

“Maybe. But if it’s true, it’s big. Several times the capital big.” I paused, feeling the location of Oeyne's clone ... which was definitely not in the sky. “At least they’re secret prisons in a different location,” I said, then felt the location of the angel I had just maimed. “And so is the secret chamber of that angel.”

“What’s the sequence,” she said.

“Three steps,” I said, but I didn’t have much time. The beacons I left wouldn’t last long, as I deliberately made them underpowered. And, the city’s location feels weird, like it’s occasionally shifting in location.

“Probably a defensive method,” Oeyne suggested. That was probably the case. They might have nothing to fear from people of the material plane — well, except me, but they didn’t know that — but the same thing didn’t apply to their divine enemies.

Even assuming they had no enemies — which was an absurd assumption — most gods would be to weaken their bargaining position. I had no doubt that their base had been defended very aggressively.

“I need to go,” I said as I kissed Oeyne, and she nodded.

First, the prison. Hopefully, Titania would be there.

I didn't teleport the location directly, but instead targeted a location that would take several minutes to travel even if I flew on a fake elemental. And, without it, the travel took even longer, but I didn't want to trigger any alarm in the process.

Not when my favorite librarian's life was at stake.

It turned out to be a good choice, as I had to bypass several detection wards in the process, each supported by an artifact. Though, as long as I approached them carefully, they were easy to bypass. Their need for secrecy prevented them from building an impenetrable prison.

Instead, they decided to bury the prison deep, relying on magic to conceal themselves from the beasts, and limiting the number of guards to avoid betrayal. A smart choice.

Too bad that it left them particularly vulnerable toward my skill set. I didn't even bother engaging with the guards, using another cloak of darkness to bypass the wards. Soon, I was at the center of the prison, where Oeyne's clone was, trapped in a complicated array.

And, next to her, there was Titania.

The moment I had seen her, I had decided to murder that corrupted angel painfully, because the scene in front of me was worse than I expected. Titania was locked in an array, her body glowing with Light Spark.

But not just that. Her Light Spark was Tainted. At first, I assumed it to be another divine spark, Spark of Water, but it was not.

The Divine Spark, regardless of nature, gave a similar feeling to a soul. Concentrated and directed, but still somehow human.

Whatever tainted her felt more like Primordial Aether, but a wild version. But, whatever it was, it was strong, enough to devour and destroy her spark despite being much smaller.

I frowned. I wanted to destroy the prison for daring to do such a thing. I didn't know the thing that tainted her soul, but I could see that, without my unique set of skills, it would have been deadly. And, even with my unique skills, it wasn't a trivial situation.

I suppressed the desire to destroy the prison as I searched the place, hoping to find something that would give me an idea about her situation. But, there was no information.

I took Titania away to another base I created for her, leaving a clone behind to warn me when

someone started to experiment on them. Meanwhile, I needed to do some experiments.

But, before, I needed to deal with a corrupted angel.

—

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{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

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Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge}

Chapter Three Hundred Twenty-One

Ironically, for all its defenses, finding and sneaking into the hidden base of the corrupted angel had been even easier than I had expected. He was trying to take control of his out-of-control Divine Spark, which allowed me to discover him rather easily through the temporary connection I had triggered.

His base was hidden much better, but by tracking his location, that was removed.

And, once that was gone, the other defenses had been even easier to bypass. “Fascinating,” I said even as I walked around. He had no guards, no doubt afraid of betrayal in his vulnerable state, but it left him even more vulnerable.

It was a treasure trove. There were several rooms filled with familiar-looking crystals, glowing with Divine Spark, along with Eternal Gems, weapons ... and most importantly, an incredible amount of books.

There were many different types of Divine Sparks. Some, I recognized easily, like Necrotic, Forging, Light, and Nature — though Necrotic was definitely the most common one. Others, I never interacted before, but recognizing was easy enough. Arcana, Swordsmanship, Elemental, and many other skills. I didn’t know how exactly Swordsmanship and other melee abilities interacted with Divine Spark, but I didn’t bother exploring that point, and just brought several samples from each of them.

And turned the rest into Purified Spark — except the elemental ones that felt significantly different. There were only Water ones available.

[+8,183,190 Purified Spark]

The Eternals were even richer than I had initially thought if that was the amount someone could steal successfully from their vault.

No wonder they had been treating Gods as some kind of weapon for their purpose. Even though they were split into pieces and therefore not as valuable, there were still enough Sparks to create multiple gods. It was not a joke.

Then, I moved to the center room, which was a giant version of the crystal structures that Mariel had used to suppress her own sparks.

I sneaked forward, and pressed my hand to his head, draining all Divine Spark from him. It

killed him directly, not even letting him have a chance to speak, but I didn't want to risk if he had some kind of trigger that could communicate with his allies. Divine Spark still had too many secrets, and I didn't want to test myself against a being that had been experimenting on it for centuries.

An ignoble end to a dangerous enemy ... but that was how assassination worked. All the effort that went to months of acting, fake displays, and baits, all to force my enemy to reveal his hand without making him realize he was being targeted.

Technically, I could have tried to create a foolproof containment area, but the amount of time I needed to spend to make such a prison foolproof was too long. And, neither Helga nor Oeyne had the ability to contain if he actually escaped or called reinforcement.

With that, I sealed his unique brand of Darkness and Light mana. I doubted that I would be able to control it, and I certainly didn't want to any of the girls to use such a dangerous tool, but it could be still weaponized as a devastating bomb.

"Now, let's remove the evidence," I said, and set up several wards filled with Darkness and Light mana, ready to go off the moment someone breached the place. I wanted him to look like he died in the explosion if the Eternals managed to discover his location.

Once that was done, I teleported back to Silver Spires.

Or, more accurately, Helga's domain under Silver Spires.

She was at the center of the room, carefully analyzing the small, isolated blue fragment at the center of the room. "Any development?" I asked.

"Nothing much," Helga answered. She wasn't surprised by my presence, but only because we were in her domain, and hiding anything from her would take an incredible effort. "I can say that it's definitely not Divine Spark in any shape or form. It's not unfair to say that it's the opposite, even."

"In what way?" I asked.

"In many ways, Divine Spark is a unique, concentrated imprint of soul that somehow overlaps with a mysterious energy that fills the universe, and creates a sense of higher order," Helga said. I nodded rather than arguing. It was just a theory for the moment, and she had no evidence to support the existence of that mysterious energy. It was not the time to lose ourselves in a pointless battle.

“What we have here is essentially the reverse of it. It mixed with the Primordial Aether, and turned into a lower-order, chaotic existence.”

“Elementals,” I said.

“Very likely linked, but not completely the same. If this new energy is Primordial Aether, Elementals are the equivalent of Aether,” she answered.

“How about Titania?” I asked.

“From everything I checked, it looks impossible to just cut the infection from Titania. It infused into her soul for too long, and added that chaotic aspect to it. I have no way to remove it, and you can’t just break it down either.”

I nodded. After all, I had already tried that with a sample, and it was ... explosive.

“That means we need to study more,” I said as I revealed the books and the other samples I had brought to her, and her smile widened.

“It’s the best gift ever,” she said as she kissed me quickly before she moved to the books, her expression even more elated than the time I had actually raised her to Divinity. I wanted to bend her over the books to properly celebrate.

Pity that we were facing an emergency.

As we read, our frowns got bigger and bigger. “This is the fifth reference I caught to about other universes,” she said with a frown.

“I noticed several as well,” I said. “And, I’m starting to think that the potential they the text repeatedly mentions is the Primordial Aether more than anything. It looks like we identified how the first gods arrived here ... from another universe.”

“It looks that way,” Helga said, and I didn’t blame her for shivering in fear. We were likely looking at the most honest historical notes, drawn by the personal anecdotes spread across magical notes, and several hand-written conclusions. “Also, there are mentions of a previous rebellion that allowed the gods to cut a dimension from the main one.”

“Likely ours,” I said. She nodded, agreeing with my conclusion. “Pity there’s very little about the Eternal Rebellion,” I said. “Other than the Eternal’s repeated inability to create a second System, and all the conjecture related to it.”

“I don’t like the number of notes about trying to find the other universes,” I added. Luckily, they were all mentioned along with failure, but who could know how it would go.

“No going to another universe,” Helga immediately said.

“Oh, I wouldn’t even think about it,” I said, shuddering. Jumping between planes had been enough of an adventure for me. I wouldn’t have even bothered with the Eternals, but by achieving something they failed to achieve, I had already turned myself into a target. Only by Strength, I could protect myself against them.

Of course, that also raised some questions about where my first System came from, but I didn’t have the time to explore it.

Instead, I continued reading, slowly creating a more reliable account of the history of our universe. The first gods came from another universe. Though, at least, when they arrived, they seemed to barely step into the Chosen stage — or at least, their equivalent of it — and reached the Divinity stage here.

It was good, as the idea of older, stronger Universes was scary enough. The idea of it was strong enough that even actual gods abandoning it just for a chance to improve would have been too much.

There were some references to actually establishing the material plane, but very little about how that feat had been achieved.

Then, at one point, the Eternals established the System, based on the information from a traitor ... but once again, no real detail about her identity, just enough to confirm that she was a woman.

“At least it confirms my theory,” Helga said, though her tone was listless. “There are quite a bit notes about theories about another energy they can’t detect, and how it makes Divine Spark gather far faster. They claim that it’s some kind of energy based on the creation stages of the universe.”

“Creation, and destruction,” I corrected her as I confirmed through the other notes. “It doesn’t exactly fill me with great confidence about what would happen if they discover us.”

“True, it doesn’t,” Helga said, but once we finished reading, there was no immediate answer. There had been a lot of books, but the information they had was limited, and not entirely trustworthy.

“You should continue reading,” I said. “It looks like I’m going to visit the Eternal City.”

—

{Strength: 115 Charisma: 115

Precision: 115 Perception: 124

Agility: 115 Manipulation: 122

Speed: 115 Intelligence: 151

Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 122}

{Purified Divine Spark: 9.330,787}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge}

Chapter Three Hundred Twenty-Two

Analyzing Titania's soul was a challenge, which was why I invested most of my Purified Spark into my stats.

[-8,645,700 Purified Spark]

[+45 All Stats]

But, even with my increased capability, analyzing it was a challenge.

As we studied the mysterious elemental energy — which we decided to name Elemental Spark — that had been infused in Titania's soul, we reached a conclusion.

For all its similarities with the Divine Spark, It was impossible to remove, and almost as impossible to control. Worse, it didn't react to Tantric, removing most of my tools from the play.

Luckily, Titania was still stabilized, preventing a potential disaster. But, it was only temporary.

"It looks like I'm going to have to take the risk," I said to her with a sigh.

"Are you sure?" Helga answered. "Her situation is still stable. Maybe we could find a solution."

"Maybe, but I'm not as hopeful," I admitted. "For all the similarities, the Elemental Spark has none of the features that make it easy to bond with the human soul," I said. "It's clear that they come from the same source, but without the filtering that the Divine Spark receives during its creation process, it's far more volatile."

"Still, we're making progress —" she started, only for me to silence her.

"No, you're making progress," I admitted. "Let's be honest, without the Tantric working, I'm not exactly a good researcher. It's far more efficient for you to stay here while I finally try to infiltrate the Eternals," I said.

"How are you going to do it?" she asked.

"Easy, I'm going to infiltrate one of their recruitment teams," I said. "The other soldiers that I tracked already revealed a few bases, and infiltrating them is very easy. I had already walked around the bases easily," She looked at me doubtfully. "Well, it's easy if you can fake soul spaces instantly," I corrected. "Most of their access points are reliant on checking a specific soul-space

signature, and I can fake it easily enough.”

Which was a big security gap, but I didn't blame the Eternals for it. After all, who would have guessed that their unique achievement would have been invalidated?

“Are we sure that we're going to find the answers about the Elemental Spark there?” she asked.

“Inevitably,” I answered. “There has to be a reason why the elementals are desperately trying to invade this plane while not bothering with the others,” I said, revealing my approach. Then, after one last kiss, I teleported away.

Right in the middle of one of the recruitment bases, an illusion already covering my face perfectly. After my improved stats, the illusions I used looked real ... not that it mattered. The guards at the teleportation room just checked my identity through their artifact, and a tendril of mana touched my fake soul space, which perfectly copied the soldier I had replaced.

I didn't care much about the base itself as I moved forward. A turn through a corridor, and soon, I was at the room where the new recruits had been held. A little adjustment to the paperwork, was an illusion, and I was among the crowd.

No one even noticed it. After all, the new recruits consisted of hundreds of people, all waiting to be transported into the main base to expand their soul space forcefully. And, once they leveled up, they would be brought to one of the trial grounds — like the one I had stumbled on when I met with my dragon friend — to see which ones would survive the transformation without going berserk.

A journey I wouldn't be joining them.

I needed to reach their base.

I stayed at the base for six hours before the guards ordered us to visit a teleportation array. Of course, the base didn't teleport that many recruits every day. Some of the recruits had been waiting for her for weeks ... but I had already known the delivery date for this base was close. It was the reason I picked the timing.

I stayed in the middle of the crowd as we were led to our destination, finally about to visit the main Eternals' base, which I failed to discover despite how much I worked.

I stopped at the teleportation array, and the world shifted... I found myself in another closed room.

Ironically, the moment I stepped into the base, I discovered the reason why I wasn't able to find the location of the base.

We were flying, which was obvious from the location of both Helga and Oeyne.

Not just flying, I noticed after a moment, that I felt a smooth flicker, and our location changed significantly. The base was not just flying, but also teleporting in some frequency.

No wonder I wasn't able to pinpoint its location during my searches.

The new recruits had gone through a very detailed process, checking our soul spaces three different times to make sure there was nothing wrong. Unfortunately for them, that proved to be ineffective. I stayed undetected, and was soon directed to a room with all the others.

It was a fascinating room. A huge, impressive tower, one that gave me the first glimpse of their base through a large window.

I ignored the speech one of the Eternals delivered — one that included a long story about the honor and mission, laced with a lot of mind-altering spells to develop a subconscious sense of loyalty — in favor of examining the base.

The first thing: it was not a base, but a fully-fledged city, one that easily housed tens of millions of people, which made me change my impression quite a bit. A fully-fledged, flying city, one that could teleport fully. Not exactly a simple enemy.

At a distance, I could see the Eternals were a far more egalitarian crowd. At a distance, I could see angels, dragons, phoenixes, and many beings I didn't recognize flying, and on the ground, and on the ground, I was able to recognize many races, elves, humans, and many others that were supposed to be extinct.

A far more egalitarian crowd than I expected. Worse, in many of them, I could see the signs of Divine Spark, far better integrated than the corrupted angel I killed — though none of them looked like they were trying to mix two types.

I wondered if the gods they had been trading with were aware of the truth of the matter.

However, as I watched them, I understood why the elementals were constantly trying to invade the area as well. There were huge four artifacts, one at each corner of the flying city, and in each, an elemental was trapped, each taller than a mile.

I didn't know their function. Maybe they were there as trophies, or maybe they were generating the force that allowed the huge city to fly. Either way, they looked far stronger than the other elementals that attacked the plane.

I had to admit, at this moment, I questioned my whole plan. I had expected to face a formidable enemy at the base ... but what I found here was far too strong. Not something I could fight even if I pushed my stats ten times higher.

Even sneaking around felt dangerous.

Maybe Helga was right. Slowly exploring Titania's affliction was the better option. I would have turned and left, but it would just alert my enemies. So, I stayed, waiting for the process to end so I could escape.

The speech was over soon. "Prepare for the enlightenment!" the speaker shouted.

And the building was filled with mana. A very familiar form of it.

Tantric Mana.

I stretched my own control to the nearby recruits, examining their soul spaces to fake my own. I was shocked by the process ... as it was far more aggressive and incompetent than I expected. The Tantric mana felt forceful and uncontrolled, damaging the soul spaces it targeted even as it left many problems.

At first, I thought it to be accidental, that whatever Eternals using to control the mana lacked control, but the more I examined, the more I realized the problem had a different source. There were two controllers for the mana.

One controller did its best to stabilize the flow, while the other did its best to turn it into a destructive mess, trying to destroy every single System user.

I already had a feeling about the identity of the second controller ... but, I realized that it was not a one-way process.

YOU'RE HERE, SAVE ME! FREE THE ELEMENTAL LORDS!

The words echoed in my mind, showing that I had been detected. That would have been bad enough ... if it wasn't accompanied by a sudden shift. The city teleported again, but this time, we weren't anywhere at the main material plane, but floating in Primordial Aether directly.

The creatures rushed forward, while at the same time, a huge army of elementals rushed from all directions, flooding from the primordial aether, and forcing the city to defend.

Fuck.

—

{Strength: 160 Charisma: 160

Precision: 160 Perception: 172

Agility: 160 Manipulation: 170

Speed: 160 Intelligence: 220

Endurance: 231 Wisdom: 192}

{Purified Divine Spark: 725,291}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge}

Chapter Three Hundred Twenty-Three

My first reaction as I suddenly found myself in a battle, especially when I was supposed to be doing an infiltration mission and nothing else, was to curse.

Only in my mind, of course. Because, as the new recruits, we were supposed to have fallen unconscious. I used the opportunity to observe and decide on an action.

The first thing I realized was that the city was not ready for a battle, their citizens attacking slowly but steadily ... but neither were the elementals. Their numbers looked impressive, but they came across as a disorganized wave.

A surprising battle for both sides.

Admittedly, it was a good opportunity for me to follow the suggestion that came from the voice. As the chaos raged, I could sneak toward the center of the city and do what the voice asked me to. There was only one problem.

I didn't trust it.

I was reasonably sure that the voice was the thing that was responsible for my unique brand of the System, but I had long concluded that that didn't mean I would trust them. Triggering a battle without even asking my opinion to force my hand didn't make things any better.

What really annoyed me was that it didn't really matter whether I trusted the voice or not. I needed to act.

Even before seeing the city, I was aware that the Eternals were a dangerous enemy, one that could turn my life into hell if they were aware of my existence. Anonymity had been my greatest weapon. That feeling only intensified when I saw the true base of the Eternals. They had been more passive than even I expected, lost in their own world, happy with all the Divine Spark they collected through the System, and by exchanging with the gods.

If they won the battle, it was inevitable that they would turn more active. If they did, it was very likely that they would discover my presence sooner or later, forcing us to retreat and abandon everything, which would likely include the two planes that were under our control.

One way or another, I had to act.

The guards who were responsible for the recruitment effort were distracted by the battle,

making it easy for me to slip out and move deeper into the city. I ignored the tall crystal towers and the beautiful gardens while I searched for a place to hide.

And, focused on my connection with Helga. It was an invasive spell, one that inevitably left a mark on the protective barrier, but the Eternals had bigger things to worry about.

“What’s going on?” Helga asked.

“I need you to test whether the System currently having any problems?” I asked. “Any drop in power, or slowing communication,” I asked?

“No, why?” she answered after a moment.

I gave her a quick summary of the battle. “I wanted to validate what the System had been telling me about it being trapped at the Eternal City,” I said. “But, it’s clearly a lie. The planar border of the material plane is strong enough to interfere with the communication.”

“It’s probably what’s shacking them,” Helga guessed. “They will be free if you destroy them.”

“And, there’s a chance they’ll get free even if the battle goes on long enough. With the planar border in between, there had to be some limitations.”

“True,” Helga answered. “I might discover the real location if that’s true. There has to be some signs.”

“Excellent, you focus on that, and alert me if there’s anything wrong,” I said, giving her the task.

Then, I interrupted the connection. Just in time, a being I didn’t recognize rushed toward me, carrying a sword that was glowing with a dangerous amount of pure air mana. An eternal guard, I recognized even as I faded into the background, gathering enough life energy to counteract the assault.

I paid attention to his armor, which was a work of art, with many different decorations covering its surface. Their operations were a mystery to me, but I could still see that he was a high-ranking one.

However, I was surprised by their daring to use elemental mana even when they were being attacked by the elementals.

Then again, maybe that was why he was assigned to guard duty rather than the front lines.

As he was rushed forward, I waited for an opportunity to ambush him. Which didn't work, as the moment he arrived, a gentle wind covered every inch of the alley, and he turned toward me. A dangerously competent mage.

And, also a demigod that was stronger than an ordinary avatar, I realized even as he swung his sword, and the whole alley filled with sharp mana blades. If it wasn't for the corrupted angel's nice gift, it would have been a fight that would make me struggle.

Instead, I scooped a huge amount of primordial aether — one that was available to be reached in a sub-dimension of the city — turned it into mana, and teleported right behind him.

Punching through the wards was supposed to prevent that.

He was surprised by my achievement, but he reacted quickly, his blades reversing direction. Too bad he wasn't fast enough to match with my new stats. I punched through his chest, the armor crumbling under my mana-reinforced punch, and used the closeness to invade his body with Tantric mana.

The first thing I noticed was the Divine Spark, an amount that was considerably less than I had expected. From his display that was strong enough to match an Avatar, I expected him to have around a million Divine Sparks, not just barely thirty-thousand.

But, it was arranged in a mysterious pattern, as if it was designed to be channeled only in specific ways. It restricted the flexibility greatly, but there was no doubt about the impact.

[+32,193 Divine Air Spark]

I didn't purify the result. Even if it was Divine Spark and not actually an elemental spark, it might help me find a way to cure Titania's ailment.

The moment I killed him, I triggered an explosion by flooding his body with the twilight spark, though I made sure to lean in the darkness aspect to make it look like the unique mixture of the angel I had killed. Then, I went a step further and wore his visage as an illusion.

There was no harm in creating a fake culprit.

I flew away for a while, watching as several Eternals approached from a distance before I dove down to another alley. I had to admit, the acquisition of the Air Spark had been timely, as it allowed me to create several fake elementals around me, which then attacked the ones that chased me.

“Alarm the defensive lines, some elementals have slipped through the defenses,” one of the leaders shouted even as he chopped the fake elementals down without even realizing they were fake ones.

My subterfuge habit once again proved to be useful.

Once I avoided the chase, I moved around until I found a spot that could help me observe the battle and allow me to take the next step.

First, I examined the border of the city. A huge mana shield, one that could rival a planar border, was around the city, keeping the Primordial Aether out, showing that the city could easily function as an artificial plane.

However, just like a plane, it was unable to resist a more focused assault. At several points, the elementals breached the defenses, forcing a melee. A wind of Primordial Aether accompanied their breach, but some kind of defensive spell interfered immediately and shuffled the Primordial Aether into some kind of sub-dimension to slowly break into Aether, then to mana.

They probably had no idea that they gave me near-infinite mana through that method.

A good advantage, one that I could use to my benefit as I slowly moved deeper into the city. With people searching for a rebel angel, I actually had a good chance to escape. A good thing, as, at the edge, I could see several undead avatars appear and attack the elementals. Their presence didn't surprise me, as, at this point, the alliance between the Eternals and the undead was not a mystery but a fact.

With their presence, I expected the battle to end with the Eternal victory, but there were too many elementals gathering, signaling the battle would still take a while. With the teleportation feature of the city being interfered with the System, I had the ability to walk around without a problem, maybe even raid their Divine Spark warehouses.

Turning the trap into a treasure.

Then, just like that, I had managed to curse myself. Someone appeared in the primordial Aether, attacking the undead from behind.

Someone that I was familiar with. Intensely.

Marianne.

—
{Strength: 160 Charisma: 160

Precision: 160 Perception: 172

Agility: 160 Manipulation: 170

Speed: 160 Intelligence: 220

Endurance: 231 Wisdom: 192}

{Purified Divine Spark: 725,291}

{Divine Air Spark: 32,193}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge}

Chapter Three Hundred Twenty-Four

Annoyance and relief battled in me as I watched Marianne attack the undead with a confidence that shocked me.

As she raised her hand, modified life magic radiated, countering and destroying the necrotic energy it touched, even more effective than my own modified light-life attack. She wore shiny armor, and her blonde hair danced in a way that made my blood move faster. She looked good.

More importantly, I could see her domain trying to establish itself, showing that her absence had been productive. I would have been surprised, but the timing of her attack made it obvious that it was the mysterious actor behind my unique System that helped her. Otherwise, there was no chance she could absorb her unique Divinity in such a short time.

Just not as strong as she would have developed with my help.

Seeing her alive and thriving was a beautiful surprise, but most of the relief was negated by the inconvenient presence of her attack. I could see her rushing into the endless undead army recklessly, which put her in a perilous position.

Her presence ruined my plan to slowly sneak in and find the center while Helga worked to discover the core of the System. I couldn't just abandon her to certain death. I could see avatars of eight undead gods closing in, accompanied by the real body of one, ready to surround her, hidden away from her detection.

I pulled the darkness around me tighter to stay hidden as I rushed forward, glad for the recent acquisition of Air Spark, which helped me to enhance my speed even further. First, I needed to break her from the trap before they took action.

There was one thing to my advantage. Once detected, an ambush was more of a danger to the undead. In an effort to keep their ambush hidden from Marianne, none of them had started pushing their domain. Admittedly, it was not a bad strategy. If it wasn't for my most recent improvement in Perception, along with my magic expertise, I would have missed their presence in the undead mass.

Unfortunately — for them — the battlefield was an unforgiving place. Without the domain, they were vulnerable, and with their focus on Marianne, the sole god with his real body — a lich wearing some kind of crown — noticed my presence only when I put my hand on his skull.

Too late.

He tried to establish his domain, but I flooded his body with enough of my unique brand of mana to break down his Divine Spark.

Unfortunately, even when ambushed, taking down an actual god took some time and most of my attention. I couldn't succeed if the other eight avatars attacked me at the same time.

"Marianne, now, attack with your full power," I shouted even as I stretched my mana. She looked at me, shocked, but quick to recognize me once my mana touched her, and a connection bloomed between us, using the remnant old connection from the System.

She could have easily broken that connection as a Divine Being, but instead, she strengthened it, her face blooming with a big smile as she recognized me despite my disguise. And, I used that to block the other connection she had with the System before the mysterious connection could catch onto it.

Another task that was only possible because of her trust. It would have been an impossible task if she tried to defend that connection with the System.

I didn't snap the connection completely, but let it carry a bunch of fake information. At the same time, I used our connection to send an incredible amount of mana toward her. Not just pure mana, but most of my Pseudo-HP I stored.

"Thanks, honey," she said as the mana flooded her, which she channeled into her domain. Pseudo-HP was even easier for her to convert to an attack with her own unique brand of Divine Spark. A glow covered the battlefield, targeting eight avatars at the same time, forcing them to deploy their own domains defensively.

And, gave me the time to drain the undead god that was supposed to be resurrected infinitely.

[+6,291,192 Purified Spark]

"Excellent work, my love," I said even as I dumped all of it into my stats, improving myself even further. The exponential nature of the growth weakened the potential of the improvement somewhat, but every bit counted.

[+20 All Stats]

[-5,820,700 Purified Spark]

“My pleasure,” Marianne said as she continued to attack the avatars, preventing them from establishing their domains, and looking amazing while she did so. And, without their domains, they were even weaker to my attacks.

In the process, I created several large crystals glowing with an ominous dark purple color, making it look like I was capturing their Spark rather than devouring them wholesale. It was one secret I had no intention to reveal, even when my power was increasing greatly.

[+3,248,300 Purified Spark]

[+10 All Stats]

[-3,441,850 Purified Spark]

“I’m so glad you’re alive, my love,” Marianne said after we dealt with enough undead to give her a chance to establish her domain.

“Me too, but what are you doing here?” I asked.

“We’re trying to help Cornelia,” she said proudly.

“What’s wrong with her?” I asked.

“She’s having some complications with her Divine Spark, and the solution is here,” Marianne explained. “So, when the System alerted us to the possibility, we decided to act ...” she said. Just as she spoke, the defensive barrier of the city trembled, as one of the corners of the defensive barriers shattered.

The corner that was being held by the Fire Elemental.

“That’s what’ll help Cornelia, right?” I asked even with a sinking feeling. It was clearly a trap, but once again, I was slower to react. Another step in the System’s plan, one that forced me to avoid the mess even more. “Who’s we?” I asked.

“Aviada, of course,” Marianne answered. “She’s the one that helped us escape from the main material plane.”

“Very good,” I said as I looked around, watching as the eternal army tried to react to the sudden changes in the battlefield, trying to adapt to intensifying elemental attacks. Fire elementals, in particular, were having a far easier time penetrating. “I need to continue distracting them while I go and help Cordelia,” I said, and cast a spell.

It was a beacon, one that contacted Seldanna and Mariel, summoning their avatars to my side. At my right, light started to gather to form a winged being, shadows creating accents. At my left, flowers bloomed, quickly gathering into a humanoid figure.

I used a lot of mana to help them summon their avatars, but even then, it was a slow process. I just reduced it to a minute rather than hours.

“What’s going on —” Marianne said as she looked at the two gathering avatars, surprised, but before she could say anything else, I took a step forward, kissing her. She was quick to respond, and used the proximity to flood her soul with my mana, helping her to bond with her Divine Spark better.

Thankfully, our emotional closeness meant that Marianne accepted that without asking any question rather than resisting and slowing down the process. My increased stats made the process even stronger.

However, as I felt Marianne’s lips over mine, I care less about that. Instead, I raised a shadow barrier to block us from the view, and pressed her armor. It had an automatic removal spell, which required a unique spell to trigger, which worked as a lock.

Armor fell, revealing her beautiful body wearing just a corset, which I pulled down to grab her beautiful breasts. “I missed those,” I said even as I squeezed them, making her moan. Not seemingly appropriate in the midst of a battle, but the pleasure made her soul even more malleable to my intervention, quickening the process of her power up.

However, the similarities between her Divine Spark and Mariel’s played quite a role in the speed of my achievement as well. Otherwise, even with my advantages, I couldn’t squeeze the process into a minute.

I played with her body, not because of the pleasure it granted me — well, not only that, at least, as I truly missed my curvy healer — but because I needed every help I could find.

Luckily, it was something I enjoyed immensely.

“And I missed your massages,” she moaned as I twisted her nipples. “But why is my Domain getting far stronger.”

“A gift, of course,” I said as I pulled back, and put the armor back on. She looked disappointed. Frankly, I was as well, but there were more urgent things we had to deal with. And, now that our connection recovered once more, I was not afraid of not finding her once more.

The magical block that was keeping us hidden from the battlefield fell, and Marianne came face to face with Mariel and Seldanna. “H-headmistress,” Marianne gasped.

Mariel’s smirk was visible even under the circumstances. “Marianne, this is Seldanna,” I said as I pointed at the flower avatar.

“A - a pleasure,” Marianne said, still looking surprised.

“Your powers combine perfectly to deal with the undead. I want you three to cut through the undead army and in general be a nuisance, but stay at the edge,” I said, ignoring my desire to introduce the three in a far more familiar manner. Unfortunately, Cornelia’s situation was too dangerous to be delayed, so I had to leave that for the future.

“But, we need to march at the center to save Cornelia—” Marianne started, but I cut her argument off with a gesture.

“No, I’ll handle that, I promise,” I said. She looked unwilling, but she still nodded, trusting me to handle it.

I was glad for that, because controlling a rebellious goddess would have been a very troubling challenge.

With that, I departed. I had an angry goddess of fire to save.

—

{Strength: 190 Charisma: 190

Precision: 190 Perception: 204

Agility: 190 Manipulation: 201

Speed: 190 Intelligence: 254

Endurance: 268 Wisdom: 230}

{Purified Divine Spark: 913,221}

{Divine Air Spark: 32,193}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge

Goddess of Healing}

Chapter Three Hundred Twenty-Five

As I rushed toward the fire tower, I didn't neglect creating a small mana subdimension for my three goddess, linking directly with the Primordial Aether to provide them with more mana than they could control.

It was needed, as once we dealt with the ambush, the undead responded with more force. I could count more than a hundred avatars surrounding them, and at least three gods that approached them.

And, that was their share. An even bigger force was moving toward the tower of fire, mixing with the other members of the Eternals. I was so lucky that the majority of the Eternals were actually escaping the battle, some feeling strong enough to be a serious threat.

With the System unreachable, their courage faltered significantly. I didn't sympathize with them, as every single one of them had some kind of Divine Spark, and they could have easily fought against the tide. Instead, they relied on their disposable undead underlings while they chose to stay in their estates, which allowed the elementals to penetrate the city far more.

It was hard to pity them, when they let monsters kill people for hundreds of years just to speed up Divine Spark generation.

I slowed down to keep my approach concealed, as a considerable number of Eternal warriors and mages surrounded the place, ready to act. Luckily, behind me, the battlefield was getting more heated as the girls put their infinite mana to good use.

Mariel took the point, using her aggressive light attacks to vaporize the strong undead that could threaten them with precision, while Marianne's unique spark was perfect for area effect, dealing with the weaker horde.

This left Seldanna free to grow a shocking number of treants that she sent forward wave after wave, countering the enemy's number advantage while also entangling any Eternal that wanted to join the mess to support the undead.

Three of them made an excellent anti-undead army.

Sometimes, I loved my luck.

Unfortunately, even with my luck, pushing through the army that was trying to cut through the fire elementals that tried to defend the tower wasn't easy. Though, as I moved forward, an

Eternal flew back, bisected. I checked his trajectory, and at his start point, I found a familiar figure.

Aviada.

She changed during her long absence but also stayed the same. Her shiny black hair was longer and gathered to a braid, and she wore a full plate armor that was made the same style as Marianne's, but otherwise, she was the same. At least, physically.

She still had her family sword, but it was glowing with some kind of mysterious inner fire, every swing enough to take down an Eternal.

We had clearly underestimated the potential of her sword. It had some kind of Divine Spark inherent to its metal. It was hard to define, but Sword Spark wasn't a bad definition. Maybe Cutting Spark would be more accurate.

It didn't just cut physical stuff. Every swing of her cut even magic, no matter how strong. Truly a fascinating weapon.

It even had its own domain. Fairly small, but robust enough to cut any other domain that was trying to push against hers.

To make her even more dangerous, she had her own spark empowering her. It was harder to detect, but it felt more like some kind of physical improvement, mostly Strength and Agility with a sprinkle of Speed, allowing her to move far faster even though she was merely a pseudo-goddess.

A devastating combination.

I wanted to talk with her, but unfortunately, that was not exactly possible. Instead, I moved slightly away from the battlefield, and summoned Oeyne's avatar while communicating with her.

"It's a mess in here," Oeyne said the moment she appeared.

"I need you to support Aviada," I asked. There was a reason I left Oeyne out of the anti-undead team, even though her abilities would mix excellently to empower the treants Seldanna was growing.

Aviada trusted Oeyne. After all, she was the one who introduced me to Oeyne in the first place.

“It looks like a mess,” Oeyne said, but she didn’t ask any more questions. She knew that it was a dangerous situation.

I needed to help her a bit more. I cast a spell to pull any metal that was currently discarded and ownerless to her, and at the same time, created a defensive position with her with its own forge. “Create confusion,” I asked her.

A goddess of the Forge was not exactly the ideal combatant, but with the defenses I created for her, and Aviada’s help to harry any dedicated attacker, she could provide some valuable distraction. And, even if she failed, she was only here as an avatar.

A defeat might be crippling to any other goddess, but as long as we were victorious, I could help her absorb more Spark.

I didn’t stay helping her communicate with Aviada. I didn’t trust Aviada ... well, I trusted her to help me and not attack me. I just didn’t trust her to hide her reaction to my presence, or not to alert the whole enemy army to my presence due to sheer surprise.

She had always been excitable and aggressive, and expecting that to get somehow more manageable after the clear power-up she managed to gain... No, that would be stupid. Instead, I stayed at the corner, watching her battle against some of the other threats while Oeyne rapidly forged several golems, her divine domain making it far easier.

It wasn’t the most ideal way of using mana on the battlefield, but I couldn’t afford to summon Helga.

She still needed to discover the real core of the System, a task she was uniquely suited for.

Aviada confirmed the accuracy of my guess soon enough when the golems started marching. “Oeyne,” she declared happily the moment she noticed her presence, not noticing the potential additional risk she had exposed Oeyne.

I vaguely felt a sense of disapproval from her sword. It was subtle, but I didn’t think that it was just an illusion.

However, while the possibly-sentient nature of her sword was important, it wasn’t urgent. So, I ignored it as I carefully floated closer to the tower. Bypassing the Eternal army was easy, especially when they started to pay too much attention to Aviada and Oeyne.

The elementals were more of a challenge, but my extended experience with fire magics helped

there. I pulled the flames around me, and with a layer of darkness magic underneath. Combined, I registered as an elemental to their mindless rage.

And, they lacked the intelligence to question why one of their members had been rushing to the opposite side of their mindless rush, toward the tower.

Of course, while it was a simple trick, it was certainly not easy. Elemental flame was a completely different challenge than ordinary fire magic, and without my ridiculous stats, I could never control them directly.

Using them to attack my enemies would have been easy ... but controlling them tightly enough that they wouldn't touch the darkness layer underneath while letting them burn outward freely was much more difficult.

Pure elements were strong enough to burn through magic if touched, so I couldn't just ward it. Any ward that was strong enough to actually block the flames would alert both the elementals and the Eternals to my presence, ruining the whole point of stealth.

But, after my recent improvements, it worked perfectly. Combined with Aviada's distraction, I arrived at the tower.

The tower itself was the most marvelous magic object I had ever seen. Too bad it was completely shattered as the elemental lord it was supposed to be containing raged. I climbed, only to see one of the most amazing, yet scariest sights I had ever seen.

Cornelia, naked as the day she was born, wrapped in flames. Her eyes were closed and she looked frozen, the flames actually invading her.

I prepared to interfere. Whatever that was going on, it was not good news.

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Speed: 190 Intelligence: 254

Endurance: 268 Wisdom: 230}

{Purified Divine Spark: 913,221}

{Divine Air Spark: 32,193}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge

Goddess of Healing}

Chapter Three Hundred Twenty-Six

The battle raged outside as I walked toward Cornelia, still trying to decide what to do. The decision would have been easy if the thing that was invading her soul was anything but Elemental Spark. My experience with Titania showed just how difficult it was to handle.

And, that was just a sliver of energy instead of the flood Cornelia was dealing with. A flood that was being consciously driven by intelligence. The flames that surrounded her didn't burn her, but I had a feeling that it could be changed at any moment.

The smart thing to do was to turn back and leave Cornelia to her fate. Instead, I cast a spell against the flames. Nothing impressive, just a mere bolt of flame, mixed with Tantric magic. "I come to parley," I said.

HOW DARE YOU!

It didn't make a sound, yet the intent was clear. It wasn't like the message from the System, which was overwhelming but featureless, barely enough to be discerned as female. It felt like the sky had been covered with burning letters instead.

"I dare because I represent the biggest hope of your freedom," I answered, feeling the greatness of the sealed entity. This time, a flame attack rushed toward me, covering me as well. I was ready to create a barrier made of several Divine Sparks, enough to isolate the flame, but it didn't burn.

The silhouette of a bird, made entirely of flames, appeared in my mind. "I am a primordial being of flames. Look at my form and despair!"

She sounded furious, but somehow, I felt a hint of desperation as well. Not shocking. If I was guessing correctly, she had been captured and used to fuel the protections of a city, likely being experimented in the process. Hardly the most comfortable life.

I could extract herself from my grip, that much I was sure. Tantric might not have broken down Elemental Spark immediately, but it still worked wonders to isolate and protect my soul. Even better, by reaching me like that, I was able to pass through the outer defenses and was able to reach Cornelia's soul.

Just like her body, her soul was surrounded by flames, slowly being infused by Flames. I was glad that I intervened. A few more minutes, and she would have turned into a vessel.

I reestablished the connection between us, reaching to her soul while keeping the angry bird unaware. Instead, I decided to distract her by speaking. "You can show off, or we can make a deal," I offered, immediately changing the topic.

I was hoping that it would surprise her enough to pay less attention to my magical presence.

"How dare you! I had been born with this universe, far before your disgusting, parasitic ilk invaded the realm to steal and pollute!"

The interesting thing about commuting with a divine being, the conveyed information was not limited to words. As she spoke, images followed. Images that showed a wave of Primordial Aether appearing from nothingness, covering everything.

Or, maybe, creating everything. That emptiness wasn't normal emptiness. It was a true Void, dark, chilling, threatening to devour and destroy everything.

A problem for another time. The images continued, where many elements filled the void, slowly developing a plane, led by four beings. A bird made of flames, a tree made of earth and metal, a turtle made of water, and a cloud, representing air.

Four elements.

Their harmony was broken down by the sudden appearance of a ship cutting through the void at the edge, filled with elves, and bursting into the Primordial Aether. On the ship, there were many Demigods. What followed by fragmented visions of many battles, where humans, elves, angels, and many other beings, each on their own ships while they invaded Primordial Aether.

Some raiding for energy, some invading the Material Plane to turn into gods. The latter faction was led by a Goddess, whose voice was surprisingly familiar.

The System.

"Look, I'm not going to talk about how much of a barbarian my ancestors had been. We have more important things to work on," I countered. "You're clearly struggling, and either I help you in your troubling state, or I do my best to stop you."

Of course, I was not the one to suddenly extend my trust into an unfamiliar being, particularly when it was some kind of Primordial Being with a grudge. An understandable, fair grudge, but a grudge nonetheless.

The moment the connection with Cornelia was reestablished, I sent a flood of Divine Energy into her soul ... and I was glad for it. The situation was even worse than I expected. She was resisting the invasion of Elemental Spark of Flame, but only because of her own Divine Spark of Flames.

The edges were frayed by the Elemental Spark, but that was the least of her problems.

Her soul had been turned into a trap. There was something that was eerily similar to flames, which would have been almost impossible to detect if it was wrapped by Elemental Spark. But, in its core, there was a seed made of Divine Spark.

That Divine Spark wasn't exactly Purified Spark, but close enough. Cornelia was just bait, a delivery mechanism for a corrupting influence. I had no idea what it would have done once it was taken in by that bird, but my guess; it was nothing good.

I strengthened Cornelia's soul as much as possible, helping her to bond with her own Spark better. Ironically, that worked better than what Titania had been dealing with. Titania had to deal with much less Elemental Spark, but after months, it filled her soul completely.

Here, Elemental Spark was just an invader, and could be pushed out.

While I slowly reinforced her soul, I also unlocked the seed, and started examining it. It was an insidious weapon, one that would spread into the Elemental's soul and turn her into a slave. It was very complicated, and even with my Intelligence, I would have had a lot of trouble deciphering it if it wasn't based on the working principles of the System.

And, that was a topic I had great expertise.

"How dare, you pathetic mortal!" she shouted when I ignored her initial answer, and instead attacked me with a similar soul attack, trying to absorb my soul to turn me into another slave.

Big mistake on her part, as it not only slowed Cornelia's corruption, but also distracted her, allowing me to counter-attack.

By using the seed as a weapon. First, I cut its connection with the System, linking to my own unique System. Then, I started to fuel it with millions of mana. It was designed to work slowly, but that was not a drawback. I used my connection with the others to pull mana, and the Seed grew rapidly ... before that being could realize, she was completely infected.

Or, at least, her consciousness that was out of the seal. It cut her connection with her power.

Another chain of changes followed. I felt the city tremble, and at a distance, three towers crumbled ... and three elementals, in their full power, started to wreak havoc in the city. A pity, as I would have loved to capture them as well. Unfortunately, whatever was keeping them in control had crumbled the moment the balance between the four was gone.

They would soon destroy the city.

The flame bird, the one that was closest to escaping, was the only one that stayed imprisoned, but she was split into two. Her consciousness stayed captured by my System, while her power stayed, powering the city.

The flames were gone, and Cornelia collapsed on the floor. "Caesar," she gasped as she looked at me, shocked yet smiling.

"I'm here," I said as I took one step, and kissed her. "I missed you," I added even as I repaired and enhanced her control over her Divine Spark far better. "Now, follow my clone, and retreat back to the material plane," I said.

With three of the elementals free, there was no need to leave them. Worse, I could feel the three freed elementals devouring Primordial Aether with a shocking speed, suggesting that they were yet to recover to their full strength.

I didn't want to be there when they returned.

"What about Marianne?" she asked.

"I already sent clones for her and Aviada as well," I said. With that, I teleported them back to the Material plane.

"How about you?" she asked.

I smirked. "I have one last thing."

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Goddess of Knowledge

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Goddess of the Forge

Goddess of Healing

Goddess of Flames}

Chapter Three Hundred Twenty-Seven

Watching the battle of the Eternal City was an interesting experience. Almost out of body. With three of the elemental lords freed, they were cutting a swathe through the defenses of the Eternals. I stayed in place, afraid that they might prioritize freeing the fire elemental first; therefore risking the girls while they were retreating.

However, to my surprise, not only did the Elemental Lords ignore the plight of the Fire Elemental, but also they attacked each other whenever they drifted closer.

They were not exactly friends.

Unfortunately for Eternals, their enmity didn't help their defense efforts. The elemental lords, even in their weakened state, were walking embodiments of destruction. They attacked each other, but as their powers clashed, the side effects were enough to eviscerate large parts of the floating city.

As their elemental attacks clashed, the resulting explosion had been enough to destroy large swaths of the city. At a distance, I could see many Eternals trying to reach to the ships, only to fail halfway. A tragedy, but considering everything they had done, hardly undeserved.

I wanted to avoid the chaos, but the mystery of the System was still at the center of the city. As much as I wanted to stay safe, I didn't want to risk the system to fall into the hands of the elemental lords. They looked far too determined, and based on the scenes I had seen after the words of the fire elemental, I doubted that they would be merciful after gaining power.

I might have picked a simpler strategy if we had been able to discover the real location of the System in the material plane, but that was still ongoing. Instead, I took a deep breath, pulled my mana into a tight shield that could handle the aftermath of those great explosions, and rushed forward.

Some of the Eternals were strong enough to notice me, and I had no doubt that, if it wasn't for their focus on escaping, dealing with them would have been very difficult.

It was good to see that my enemies had their own troubles.

Luckily, the elementals didn't share that concern, allowing me to rush to the center of the city, where there was a central obelisk surrounded by a shocking number of wards. Even though quite a bit of them had been shattered under the attacks of the elementals, there was still

enough to create some trouble.

I connected with Helga and pulled an Avatar of hers. "What's going on—" she asked.

"A mess," I said as I pointed to the collapsing wards. "Help me with them," I said, not really having enough time to talk. Instead, we started dealing with the chaotic mess of the wards with the assistance of her unique Knowledge Spark. With that, I passed those wards ... and entered the room.

Only to be teleported into a unique mental space ... I could have resisted it, but instead, I chose to use my magic to blind the entity that pulled me to Helga's presence, which would allow her to track the location of the System core more efficiently.

"You're finally here, my champion," a voice arrived to my ear. A gentle, soft voice, preceding the arrival of a kind, beautiful woman, who also radiated a sexy aura like she wasn't aware of.

I might have fallen for it, if I didn't feel her Divine Spark trying to dive against my System to take control of it. I recognized what she had been doing. She was looking for the traps that I had long removed.

She was competent, but luckily for me, she was powerless. If I were to measure her raw power, it would be merely five points for each stat, maybe even lower. However, even with the disparity of power, if the traps were still in place, I would have been defeated.

I created a few clones of those magical traps, but intentionally jumbled them, giving her the impression that the traps just needed to be repaired. After all, the more she focused on me, the longer Helga would have to track the location.

"Who are you?" I asked, trying to keep her talking.

"I'm the goddess of creation and the System," she answered. Lies, on both accounts, but not unreasonable ones. If it wasn't for that cursed angel forcing me to travel among the planes, I might have even believed it for a time.

Luckily, delaying the talks worked to my benefit. "How could I believe you?" I asked, acting like I was inclined to believe her in the first place, but kept back.

"Watch," she said as she touched my temple, and many scenes flooded my mind. It was similar to what that elemental had shown, but also different. They lacked the vividness of the other scenes, along with an artificial feel.

They were lies, so I didn't pay much attention. I still faked it, giving the impression that I was fascinated, while the mysterious goddess still continued to try and activate the traps she had buried in the System.

At the same time, I was communicating with my girls, who finally arrived at the Material Plane, and currently dealing with an attack from the elementals, whose determination to invade Material Plane increased several times.

A trouble, or, it would have been a trouble, if it wasn't for a message from Helga, informing me that she had discovered the core of the System.

She teleported with a clone of me, which I used to tap into the stores. Considering everything, it had been an easy victory, but I was happy with it. It was much preferable to a merciless, endless battle that cost us our lives.

There were a lot of reserves in the system, enough to be counted in hundreds of millions ... yet, in a way, I felt the amount was too low. After all, it was supposed to represent the reserves collected across hundreds of years.

Eternals must have been using them more than I expected ... either that, or their connection with the other universes was stronger than I expected.

A troubling matter, but it was for the future. Right now, I have a simpler challenge. First, I turned off the System's constant absorption of Divine Spark. I might activate it in the future, but for the moment, it allowed the girls to defend against the Elementals much more easily as they established their domains.

Then, the next problem. What I would do with the Spark in storage. I could devour them to strengthen myself, which would increase my stats several times. Tempting, but still not enough to defend the material plane against the sudden elemental attack.

Luckily, that was not my only option. Instead, I used our connection, and started to channel my power to my girls, using my power to allow them to bond with the excess Divine Spark smoothly.

With that, their speed to establish their Domain got much faster, and the Material Plane was safe. At least, temporarily.

The stores of the System were almost completely depleted when the goddess realized that her traps had been removed long ago. "You!" she shouted in anger, attacking me.

“Me,” I said with a chuckle as I grabbed her hand. “What about it, miss inter-dimensional invader?” I said with a chuckle. Then, while maintaining my grip, I dispelled mental space, and forced her into a physical body.

It was made of mana, essentially an inferior avatar I could dispel just as easily. “You know,” she said, her voice resigned. “Kill me,” she added, opening her arms.

I chuckled. “No hurry,” I said with a chuckle as I grabbed her, and finally teleported away from the Eternal City, leaving the place for the battle between the Elementals and the Eternals, ignoring the temptation of trying to deal with the Elementals when they were weak.

I doubted that it could be achieved easily.

“What are you going to do with me —” she started, but before she could complete it, I sealed her again. No need to complicate things further.

Instead, I teleported to the System core, leaving my girls to deal with the Invasion.

I had a System to assimilate ... and then.

The future was limitless.