

## Chapter 185: Meeting My Blood Sister

My anxiety leveled up as the encounter with Deserae was rapidly approaching. The scent of sex and seed filled the air of the orchards while the kentaur's continued their orgy. I had a line of willing partners but needed to maximize my advancements in my mind space.

I looked up at my banner in the pedestal room. I had made some advancements, but the rapid evolution of my abilities was fatiguing, and I needed to slow down. Just like I worked my partner's core larger and larger, I was enlarging my own core slowly by metabolizing essences.

I looked at my long list of abilities.

Ability	Level		Cost to Increase
	Lower	Tier 3	
Abyssal Eyes	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Abyssal Strength	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Abyssal Speed	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Abyssal Endurance	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Abyssal Smell	Lower	Tier 2	200 life essence
Abyssal Taste	Lower	Tier 2	200 life essence
Chronomancy	Lower	Tier 2	200 life essence
Incubus Form	Upper	Tier 1	1,000 life essence
Incubus Tail	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Incubus Wings	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Succubus Form	Upper	Tier 1	1,000 life essence
Succubus Wings	Lower	Tier 1	100 life essence
Flame Ball	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Melodic Voice	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Aphrodisiac Saliva	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Seductive Gaze	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Mask Aether Core	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Cleanse Death Essence	Upper	Tier 2	na
Discern Truth	Upper	Tier 2	400 life essence
Male Elf Form	Upper	Tier 1	100 life essence
Ice Orc Form	Upper	Tier 1	100 life essence
Kentaur Form	Upper	Tier 1	100 life essence
Elixir Seed of Strength	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Elixir Seed of Endurance	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Elixir Seed of Recall	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Elixir Seed of Quickness	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Elixir of Taste	Lower	Tier 1	100 life essence
Elixir of Constitution	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Elixir of Dexterity	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Elixir Seed of Willpower	Lower	Tier 3	800 life essence
Healing	Lower	Tier 1	1000 life essence

I had added healing and improved some of my lower-tier abilities to increase my life essence pool, which was now maxed out at 665. My core felt like I had already been to three relatives' houses on Thanksgiving and filled myself at everyone. That, coupled with actually eating three Thanksgiving-sized meals every meal to increase my stored biomass, was making me nauseous.

I had two paths on which to use the life essence. I could learn a new ability and barely increase my life essence pack, focusing on increasing my other abilities and maximizing my life essence increase. Getting the cap to 800 was a priority to push my abilities to upper tier 3.

The only ability that I really wanted was invisibility.

Invisibility	Lower	Tier 0	500 life essence
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That would take almost all my life essence, though. It was also going to be useless in the encounter with Deserae as her abyssal eyes would see right through it, and any guards she brought would as well. I don't know if it was because I had just been enjoying my powerful centaur body or that I was feeling rushed, but I upgraded the centaur form to lower tier two. It was the first time I had increased one of my shifting forms.

I stepped out of the mind space to see what changes occurred. The body felt more—stable. More anchored in the form. I was also certain my abilities, like my incubus lust aura, would now be more effective in the form. I returned to the mind space to upgrade it again to upper tier two for another 200 life essence. It was noticeable as the orgy surrounding me started to slow and look at me with reverence and longing once again.

Increasing the tier appeared to increase my presence in the centaur form. Another thing that would have been nice to know. My aether core was warning me to stop, that I had exceeded its enhancement capacity and it needed time to digest the changes. That irked me, but I didn't push it further. Instead, I burned the life essence to create a new life essence and tiered it up for my partners.

Elixir Seed of Clear Thought	Upper	Tier 1	400 life essence
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Elixirs didn't affect my core, and they were closer to creating an alchemy recipe that I could use. This elixir helped with reasoning and problem-solving. I still had 65 life essences remaining and sealed it away inside my aether core. Using my core masking ability, it should prevent Deserae from reading my core. It was necessary; otherwise, Deserae would have been able to tell I was a demon with her aether sight. Only certain creatures could hold a reservoir of life essence, as we demons did.

Breaking out of my daze, I looked around at the hungry centaur faces and hooves scratching and tearing up the earth. "Time to go," I told my companions. It looked like Sofiel/Lilith had sufficiently explored her temporary body, face flush, and clothes in disarray. When we returned to our accommodations, I looked around. I asked Captain Aida, "What plan are we going with?"

“The best plan is still to ambush them in the orchards on the way to the command center. That is, if Andromeda is with them as a prisoner. If we can free her, she will balance the scales in our favor.” I nodded as if it was just Captain Aida and me. Momo and Sofiel/Lilith were essentially useless against Deserae and whatever guards she brought.

“How far can you be away from me now?” I asked Sofiel/Lilith.

“Same. Anything beyond 30 feet and the connection is strained. Fifty feet and it would snap, and we would only have a few minutes to reestablish it to keep her alive.” She said, giving a detailed evaluation.

“Okay.” I took a deep breath. “If their forces look overwhelming, we will not attack and go to plan B.” Plan B was to hide, reunite with the others, and use the transit to escape.

It took hours for the battleship Eternity to make its way into the system, offering all the codes required to enter safely. Captain Aida had retrieved her armor and was hiding in a bomb shelter that should shield her from any intense orbital scans. My own Eladrin power armor was stored in my mind space.

I waited in my centaur body, picking the yellow fruit from among the other centaurs. The females didn’t understand I was going to ambush the arriving group and constantly made to flirt with me. Some were playfully hip-checking me to get me to chase them and discipline them.

Thankfully, Momo was up in a tree, advising me on how to ignore them without causing a disturbance. The kentaur culture was very herd-based, and I wouldn’t say they were simple of mind, just more primal in their thoughts.

I could already see my influence spreading among them as the sexual pleasuring was shifting from just mounting their partner to administering their human-like parts. I bit into the fruit and was pleasantly surprised; it was sweet, tart, juicy, and meaty. I stored a few in my dimensional space.

It was still hours before Deserae landed her shuttle. She remained in orbit for hours as she scanned the planet and conversed with Caretaker Daenra. Momo was giving me updates from another kitsune in the command center. Deserae was demanding that all the defensive systems be terminated as she threatened from orbit.

Instead of caving to her demands, Caretaker Daenra was patiently explaining the procedures for handing over the governorship of the planet. I was getting the information secondhand, but when I was told the shuttle was finally descending, I suddenly questioned what the fuck I was doing. I was going to confront a succubus from the 17th layer. I began to get nervous as the seconds ticked by.

Momo, from her perch, told me, “You look like you are about to give birth. You are, most definitely, not blending in.”

I tried to relax but couldn't. Was this even a good plan? Captain Aida draws their attention, and I free Andromeda. Sofiel/Lilith was reading a tablet against a tree not far away. Her weak-appearing core would not be a threat to the succubus. Momo excitedly swung to the ground, "They brought her. Andromeda is with them. At least they are saying there is a bound red-haired succubus with them."

All the centaurs paused to watch as Deserae walked at the head of the procession. She was tall and thin with flowing black hair that almost seemed alive. She appeared to be wearing a dark blue skinsuit and not power armor. She looked human, with no Eladrin features that I could see. Six Eladrin in power armor walked behind her while a hover sled carried a woman on it between them. Her wrists and ankles were encased in solid black blocks. The features looked human but my abyssal sight couldn't penetrate some type of haze around her. Probably, the restraints were keeping Andromeda in check.

She didn't look like I remembered her from when she contracted me or appeared in my mind space. She looked plain. Her red hair was knotted and tangled. Her face was impassive, and her eyes held a simmering anger in them. As the procession approached, I started to get cold feet. How the fuck was I supposed to free her?

I decided it was time to go to plan B. Six Eladrin in power armor was too many. All I needed to do was wait till they passed. Then, I felt a slight tug of familiarity. It was not coming from Andromeda, though; it was from Deserae. Shit, I realized my blood was resonating with hers. It was like my demonic infusion from Andromeda was telling me another of her brood was close. I had felt it with Eshanya as well, but not this strong.

Deserae halted her march and looked in my direction. Her eyes passed over my centaur body and focused on Sofiel/Lilith who was pretending to read a tablet. Momo was frozen in the tree and I could feel the powerful magic wash over the area. Dozens of centaurs nearby started to get uneasy by the display of power.

Deserae appeared confused, and then I realized it was because of Sofiel's extremely weak core. Her eyes narrowed, and she approached Sofiel, who looked up unconcerned. Only one of her guards accompanied her, and she passed within a few feet of me. "Are you a success then?" She asked Sofiel. My mind spun, and then I realized this planet's research was focused on beings with a lesser core being able to travel to a higher layer. Clearly, Deserae knew that and was interested in the weak core of Sofiel.

Sofiel/Lilith put out down the tablet. With some snark, she responded, "In a manner of speaking. Are you a failure then?"

What the hell was Lilith thinking? Maybe she was planning to be a distraction, but all it would accomplish is getting Sofiel's body killed. A malevolent grin formed on Deserae. "Take her. We can find her in the research and dissect her on the Eternity." The Eladrin marine stepped forward and yanked Sofiel's body to its feet, and started dragging her back to the procession. Sofiel winked at me as passed.

I retreated into my mind space to talk with Lilith. Lilith was in the pedestal room. “When the connection is lost, Sofiel’s body will start to convulse. You won’t have much time to free Andromeda.”

“How?” I barked. “I have no idea how those restraints work!”

“Ask her,” Lilith rolled her eyes.

I returned to the orchard with only a few heartbeats having passed. Two other guards came forward with restraints for Sofiel, who was struggling and cursing in angelic. Wait, did Lilith already leave her mind space? Why was Sofiel helping us? A confused Andromeda was looking on at the spectacle and slowly tilted her head in contemplation—or maybe hope. I pretended to move away toward the rear of the procession.

Sofiel channeled her greatly weakened gravity magic, forcing one of the marines off balance and to his knees momentarily. A fourth Eladrin came to help subdue Sofiel. Two men held her, forcing her hands in the restraints when she began seizing. She looked to be having a violent stroke. My eyes met Andromeda’s as she pieced together what was going on, but she still looked confused.

Then all hell broke loose. Captain Aida started firing her weapon, destroying the head of one of the Eladrin marines and maiming another by removing his arm. If her rifle was that effective, she should have targeted Deserae. Then aether shields flashed into existence, and a firefight was on.

Deserae seemed amused at first but was now angry as she pulled a deep blue fireball from nothingness and threw it in Captain Adia’s direction. The Eladrin Captain dashed out of its path as it slammed into the ground and exploded, taking four fruit trees with it and causing a wave that knocked fruit off trees and blew over the centaurs that had not already fled.

Momo was surprisingly at my side when I reached Andromeda. “Communications to the battleship are temporarily blocked. If you are going to win this, you do not have a lot of time.”

“Who are you?” A surprisingly calm Andromeda asked.

“You don’t recognize me? I’m hurt. I am your average human corrupted by a succubus who is too stupid to be happy to be free of her control and decides to rescue her from angelics only to find she was betrayed by one of her other progeny. If you don’t mind telling me how to open this restraint.” I blathered out as I searched for a release.

“There is no release. It is solid.” Her mind raced, piecing everything together, “Are you Eshanya then? That is one of her Marines? Did she get here first? Where are the others?”

“Just me, the captain, a tainted angelic, and this mischievous kitsune. How do I free you?” A bolt of energy burned through my centaur haunches, and I used the grav sled to cover it while I transformed into my human form. I then pulled on my Eladrin armor from my mind space. The doppelganger was wearing it and just waiting for the action.

Andromeda's eyebrow arched in surprise. "Oh, the boy from Earth? What are you doing on the 17<sup>th</sup> layer?"

"I really think we can have this conversation at another time. How do I get you out of these restraints so you can smite Deserae?" I pleaded.

Captain Aida had retreated under the onslaught of fire and fiery explosions thrown by Deserae. My suit comms beeped, "My suit shield is finished, and my suit is overheating. If you can't from Andromeda, we should run."

I looked, and Captain Aida had taken out a third Marine, but she was under attack from three others and Deserae. "You could reestablish your link with me."

My head snapped to Andromeda. "What?"

"Touch me and open your mindspace to me. The restraints block all aether and life essence from me. If I rebuilt our connection, I could siphon yours. And use it more effectively than you." Andromeda said patiently. How was she so patient? The Eladrin Marines could just shoot her—no, they couldn't—not until the planet was transferred to Deserae.

Captain Adia had retreated into a passage, and Deserae was turning on me, her face not hiding her fury. "Fuck it." I reached up and pressed my hand between Andromeda's breasts. I opened my mind space to her and retreated inside to meet her there.

Andromeda stood in the pedestal room, looking around. The two pedestals I added had her grunt a little in disappointment. "Not much has changed. I need the essence of life to construct a connection with me—something superior to your archaic attempts here. Kiss me, and I will rebuild the connection." Her red hair whipped around her head as she faced me. The ancient succubus' charms were not working for me, and I would have to do this willingly. The last time she had kissed me, it was a battle of wills that I lost.

"Shouldn't we renegotiate first?" I asked, stepping back. "Maybe a promise to break the connection after Deserae is dealt with?" My mind constructs were appearing in the room. Lilith fist, then Pandora. Casper, a massive wolf body, blocked the entrance to the park. Atop him was the kitsune, Momo. Nashima was in her feathered humanoid form, standing with Calypso. Aria was naked and matched my human body as I had just summoned the Eladrin power armor from her/him. Magnus, the massive kentauro, came impatiently with one of my aether rifles. Everyone was here to back me up.

"There isn't a lot of time. Either trust me or not," Andromeda said, ignoring my host of eclectic mind constructs. I wanted to snap that now she was in a rush but held it in. I trusted my gut and leaned in. Andromeda's tongue snaked into my mouth and sucked the non-existent breath from me—no, that was life essence and aether. My power of will dwarfed hers, and even if I wanted to resist, it was futile. She didn't stop, taking everything—65 life essence and 928 aether. My knees felt weak, both in the mindspace and the real world.

Andromeda didn't even say thank you as she vanished from my mind space. The pedestal that connected us had been rebuilt and stood next to the other two pedestals that connected me to Sofiel and Momo. Pandora and Lilith came over to connect me. "Is it different than before?" I asked them, looking at Andromeda's pedestal.

"No, it is exactly the same," Pandora answered.

"Well, that sucks. Keep an eye on things in here." I slipped into my body to find a grinning Andromeda. The stones encasing her hands splashed away like they had been turned to water. Her foot restraints followed soon after.

"Shoot her!" Deserae shouted, and aether bolts splashed off an aether shield around Andromeda's body as she faced her enemies. I wobbled on my feet, a drunk-like effect from being drained. One of Deserae's fireballs splashed nearby, throwing me a hundred feet. My power arm protected me, but as I rolled and was stopped by a tree, I closed my heavy eyes. Crap, what had she done to me? I soon fell asleep while the battle raged nearby.