

## **Growth**

Anrosh walked through the forest outside Consequence. They had spent months cutting down trees, uprooting everything and clearing the land in a large circle surrounding the city. It was necessary to build up roads, but also for the expansion of the city.

Still, they had replanted all of those forests, and grew in a manner of weeks. Walking through it now, it was obvious that the forest was not natural. The trees were all spaced out evenly, they were all the same size and looked mostly similar. What was not immediately apparent was that the roots extended far beneath the ground and formed a kind of a detection net that some nature users could use to monitor the forest. Or at least they will be able to use it, once the trees were finished developing fully in a few months.

“The work is proceeding well I see,” Anrosh commented.

Ender Ornn-Dagda nodded his head. “It is, I am almost done with the gardens in the city.”

Anrosh glanced back where she could just barely see the city in the distance as they walked down a hill and out of sight. The designs made by Builder Verdon Ha Ran had changed a lot since when he first brought them to the Sect. Some for the sake of convenience, others were improved, and some simply shelved for a future time when they had the people on a level adequate enough to accomplish them.

Regardless of all of it, the city looked impressive, even in its half-finished state. They had prioritized the outer and the inner wall, along with the residential areas. A lot of the city between the inner wall and the outer in the Northern part of the city was actually empty, just cleared ground being prepared for future construction. They had expanded the city by a lot to account for growth. And still they hadn't even started on the final defenses.

The inner wall was completed and operational. The protections active. The outer one was still being worked on, and the towers that would eventually provide a layered dome shield for the city by surrounding the outer wall were being erected at this moment.

“Ahead of schedule?” Anrosh asked as she turned around to look at him. “Is that going to be an issue? We haven’t moved all the people back behind the walls. And the sewers are not fully finished.”

Ender waved his hand. “Of course, my plants can survive without the waste, they will simply produce less.”

Anrosh nodded, but still made a mental note to let Verdon know to make sure to raise the priority on the sewer system. Ender was one of the big reasons why they had to change a lot of Verdon’s plans.

With his help they had been able to incorporate plant that could help power the many mundane formations in the city by absorbing light from the sun and the moon, as well as feeding on the waste that the sewers guided to what they were calling decay containers. They had integrated the city’s systems as much as they could.

The gardens would power the wards that would keep the roads from deteriorating, strengthening wards on the buildings, and room climate control. And they even increased the Aspect tier of the Earth and Air Essences in the city. Granted, the process was slow, but eventually they expected both Essences in the city and eventually the entire territory to hit tier 9.

Ender had even cultivated a vine of his own design that served as an early warning system for poisons or toxic Essences in the air. The vines were grown along the walls of most buildings, their bright green leaves hanging over and letting everyone know that it was safe. Should the leaves turn brown at any point, it would alert people that there was something in the air. It prevented scentless and invisible attacks of such nature on a large scale.

True, Ryun would probably see any such attack coming with his eyes, but he couldn't always be in the city, as proven by the present situation. She had gotten word by a quick messenger that most of them were on the way back, while Ryun and Tali headed to visit Eratemus.

She was glad that their attack on the Dome had gone so well, but if she was being honest she hadn't even had the time to worry. There was just so much to do in the city.

“And what about the other project?” Anrosh asked.

“I am almost done with the preparation,” Ender said. “This has proven to be a challenge. I've never done anything like it before.”

“But you think that it can be done?”

“It will be done,” he said, his eyes twinkling.

Anrosh nodded, trusting him. Though even she had thought that the more ambitious of Verdon's plans wouldn't work. His entire city plan was based on the cities of his home, the demasi homeworld of Enhell. From what he said their world was a harsh one, where massive storms roamed the world. Because of that, they lived mostly in big cities built out of massive stone. With very tall walls that could blunt the winds capable of destroying anything in their path.

For Consequence, he had suggested three walls. The inner wall which protected the palace and the seat of the Sect. The outer wall which protected the rest of the city, and then further away, another wall in the image of what the demasi called breaker walls. Here, they called that wall the far wall, and it would encircle almost the entire valley. The forests, and the farms, a big chunk of the entire territory. It would provide them enough room for the expansion far into the territory.

The issue was that his proposal had been outrageous. His original plan called for stone walls almost fifty meters thick and double that tall. There was not only not enough material in the entire sect for something of that size and length to be made, there were very few geomancers around who

could raise such walls and put in all the protections that Verdon suggested. Even if they could find them, they would still need to buy formations to support walls like that, and they simply did not have the wealth for it.

That was where the former Empire's people came in, they had some experience with walls of such magnitude. After much discussion, it was decided that instead of building the walls, they simply grew them. Well, not simply, it would still have stone areas, towers and such which would hold formations, but the wall itself would be made out of massive plants designed by Ender himself.

He had been working on a new plant that they would use for the purpose since the building process of the city started. True, his creation would probably be lacking in comparison to what stone could do, but it would have other benefits. Like being able to repair itself, as well as have living defenses that would repel any attempts at climbing them.

Anrosh looked up at the mountain range surrounding them, eventually a wall would be seen going through those passes that she could see, the wall visible from every point in the valley. It would truly be a great work.

And Ender had expressed his excitement at working on the project. Now that he didn't need to devote all of his time and talents to feeding an empire worth of people, he had the freedom to experiment.

Anrosh had visited his lands and had seen how the Ornn-Dagda territories had been transformed into beautiful gardens, every building grown out of the ground and shaped by the hands of his family and servants. It was quite a sight to walk through one of their towns up in the trees the size of siege towers.

The Sect was lucky to have him, he was a master at the peak of his craft. Perhaps the greatest of his profession in the entire world. Not many would even entertain half of Verdon's plans. But Anrosh had managed to

find people within the sect and its allies that were capable of transforming his ideas into reality.

From the walls to the infrastructure of the entire sect. Verdon had been asked to draw out plans for everything, and Anrosh was slowly making it into reality. She had people mapping out the Under beneath their territories, hunting groups expanding and clearing out the danger. Undead hired from Repesh were digging an entire underground network that would connect all the major cities in the sect, making them that much harder to siege, but also expanding more avenues for trade routes. Things were changing and expanding.

It went for everything really in the sect. Not everything had coalesced quite yet, but Anrosh could see how in the near future the snowball would just keep rolling, getting bigger and bigger until the Twilight Melody Sect became a true shining example of what was possible.

Suddenly, Ender stopped, and Anrosh followed. “What is it?”

“Do you hear that?” He asked.

Anrosh frowned and turned her head, there at the edge of her hearing she did hear something. Ender turned and ran back the way they came, and Anrosh sped after him. As they reached the crest of the hill she could hear it clearly. Out in the distance she saw Consequence, smoke rising from within the walls, and alarm bells echoing all around them. She saw signs of fighting in the city, an airship patrolling above firing on something giant trampling buildings. Something fired from the city, a lance of light that speared through the airship. It happened so fast, that it shocked her frozen. The ship fell from the sky into the city.

Ender ran down the hill and Anrosh equipped her, **Spectrum Celestial Dragon Armor**, the scale plates rippling over its surface. Then she jumped after him, heading back to toward the city and the fighting she could hear in the distance.