

Departure

The preparation was wrapping up, as Ryun could see from his place up on the walls surrounding their small dock in the center of the city. Their airships were being loaded with the last of the supplies, not that they had many, and the people that were going were already present and ready. There weren't a lot of them either, the power of the Twilight Melody Sect, or in fact most other Sects, was not in manpower, it was in the individuals.

Their attack on the Dome was going to be the first endeavor taken up by the Sects, which was why they had to do it right. Ryun had seen the reports from the other two Dome offensives, both the Herald and the Grey Horde had brought entire armies, and they had suffered losses. A lot less than what Ryun had imagined, nowhere near what Hastur's dome had inflicted. Still, their Dome was going to be the first test of what the Sect doctrine, of less but more powerful individuals, could do.

"You decided?" Ryun asked the person standing next to him.

"I have," Ereclaw answered. "I'll go with you part way, 'till Dragon Heart. Then head out on my own."

"You could wait," Ryun added. "I am willing to go with you once the Domes are no longer a threat."

Ereclaw shook his head. "I've tarried too much already, I've hoped that some word would reach me to at least point me in the right direction. But... it seems like I will need to seek it out myself."

Ryun grimaced.

“I understand,” Ereclaw said. “The Domes are a great threat, true, but the yeti is one as well. One that no one is aware of or actively pursuing. My teacher does not believe that the yeti will fade into the background of the world. He had had butchered his way across the Ethereal, stealing power, he will do the same again.”

Ryun had told a few people about what Ereclaw had shared, and Zach had corroborated the accounts and asserted that the threat was real. The issue was that it was also a threat that none of them had seen or been affected by, Ryun included. He knew about it in the abstract, but even he was not willing to delay dealing with the Domes in order to pursue it.

“What will you do?”

“Travel,” Ereclaw answered. “Eventually I will hear of incidents that match his history, hopefully I’ll get lucky. It is all that I can do.”

Ryun nodded. “I am, as always, just a thought away. If you find him, reach out to me and I’ll come.”

Ereclaw showed his teeth. “It will be good to hunt together again.”

He walked away, heading to one of the airships. Ryun remained, waiting as Anrosh approached from across the dock with Kri in tow.

“I should be coming with you,” Kri said before he could greet them.

Ryun turned his head to look at her, noticing the Essences that comprised her body. She had changed, gotten stronger. “I understand why you want it,” Ryun said, and he really did understand. He had fought Dome monsters when he was Immortal, and he knew that she was powerful. “But you will gain more if you stay,” he told her. “There is still a lot that you can learn from Zach, things that neither I nor Tali can teach you.”

She grimaced, and he could already see that she wanted to protest. He cut her off by raising his hand and speaking before she could.

“The next Dome, I give you my word that I will bring you on the one we are assigned next.”

She narrowed her eyes, and he wondered if she would continue the argument. Instead, he saw her collect herself and nod. Without a word she turned and walked away.

Anrosh watched her walk away, a solemn look on her face. “I wonder if it will ever become easier to see her as a grown up.”

“You’ve done well with it,” Ryun told her.

She turned to meet his eyes. “It is hard, but I know I can’t try to control her, she will do what she wants. At least she listens to you.”

“For now,” Ryun chuckled.

“Well, the ships are mostly ready,” Anrosh added. “I’ll keep the Sect together, as always.”

“I have no doubt,” Ryun said.

“By the time you come back, Consequence might even be finished,” she joked.

Ryun shook his head, then looked out into the city. It was an ocean of colorful Essence to his eyes, but even through it all he could tell that the city had changed. The restructuring of it was going well, but they still had years of work to go. True, their trip to the dome would take months, so they might be gone for about a year.

“It is going to be quite something, once it is finished,” Ryun commented.

Anrosh nodded. “The greatest city in the world.”

Ryun didn’t say anything, that was what they planned for. They were building the foundation for a city that could easily be expanded. A city that would be welcoming and just easier to live in for anyone. A city that could become a hub for the entire world.

A shout made him glance to the side, seeing a few of the Sect Warriors loading up onto the ships.

“They’re ready,” Anrosh said.

“Well, see you soon,” Ryun smiled.

“Be safe,” she said and pulled him into an embrace.

“Of course.”

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Their arrival to the Dragon Heart Sect was met with a big celebration in their city. Their fleet was already assembled and ready above the Dragon Peak, thirty two airships, and two flying fortresses. Ryun and his people docked their ship, and were warmly met, then escorted to a meeting with the Dragon Heart’s Leaders.

After the standard Sect greetings, they settled into a bit of a more relaxed planning session. They were in the room with Hitor and his brother, Vitor, along with some of their own commanders. Ryun was surrounded by all the people he brought, Selia and Erdania stood next to him, with Karya, Nayra, and Tali standing to the side. The six of them were the ones that would be in mostly in charge of taking fighting the Dome. It was why they were picked, because they could unleash devastating power over a large area. They had some of the Sect Warriors led by Lesamitrius, but they were there just as support and would probably hang on with Hitor's fleet.

“Here is where we think we should position our fleet,” Hitor said while pointing at a circle drawn around the location of the Dome. “It is on the borders of the territory, mostly, that way if anything manages to escape you we will be able to hunt it down.”

“That's a good plan,” Karya said as she leaned over the table. “Do you have any way of tracking them though? We don't know what exactly the monster's will be capable of.”

Hitor nodded. “I've reached out to some of our subordinate Sects and gathered the best trackers and sensory experts they had, I'll be spreading them through our fleet. That should be enough. Did you finish planning your attack?”

Karya glanced up at Tali who shrugged. “There isn't much of a plan, we don't know what they can do other than that there is a lot of them. We are going in fast and hard from the start, the area where the Dome is should be slag and dust minutes after we start.”

Their plan was simple, true, but it didn't mean that it wasn't good.

“Yes,” Selia chimed in. “For all intents and purposes, it will be as if we dropped a Reaction Engine on it.”

Hitor grimaced, then nodded. “I wish that the others agreed for us to use them too. We could clean up a couple of the Domes the easy way.”

Vitor put his hand on his brother’s shoulder. “It doesn’t change much, we are sending people who can do just as much damage.”

Hitor tilted his head. “Regardless, as we’ve agreed I’ll be staying here while Vitor will accompany you with a few of our strongest. I don’t like sending so many of the Sect strongest away, the peace we have with other factions is... tenuous.”

Ryun shrugged, the fears of others didn’t concern him. “We welcome the aid,” he said.

They discussed their plans for a few more hours, and then it was time to leave.

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The Essence around Ryun rippled in waves as he focused inward. He had spent the months on their trip to get a better understanding of his new power. The Eternal Realm had changed a lot for him in some ways, and not at all in others. Still, he had never felt closer to **Oblivion** than he was now.

He sensed someone approaching both through his sense and his mind, so he pulled his power back and opened his eyes as Selia walked in.

“We’re here,” she said.

Ryun rose to his feet and followed her out to the ship's deck. Then he let his sense spread out as far as it could, and there in the distance he felt it. The Dome waited for them.