

## Selia

Selia sat in her and Erdania's rooms, in their home. The house was... rustic by their standards, but it was what they had. Selia did feel somewhat... guilty. Their house was in the expanded area of the Wolf's Grove town. What the Zenshuen people had erected outside of their walls, expanding the city significantly. She had been... peeved when she learned about it. Her family had pressured the others, had... made them build it all without the permission of the sect that they were guests in. She knew that her family had ideas about what they should do. That they, and by they she meant her, should take over and rule the Twilight Melody Sect.

The others in her now small group, were... receptive to those kinds of talks.

She didn't quite know what to do about that. She had told them that they should be grateful to their hosts, but it was hard for them to look at a Sect Leader that was an Immortal with barely 40 years of age. Most of those that came with her were old, with their families, those who thought in a certain way. Ryun they might be able to swallow, but he hadn't been here for years, neither had she.

And her family... they had always been her blind spot. She knew it, but she just couldn't bring herself to do anything about it. Erdania disliked it too, they had their biggest fights regarding them, but she was brought up in the sect too, and she knew how much family meant, so they mostly ignored them.

They had overstepped, she knew that. And she worried about Ryun's reaction. She knew that he was back, and with every day that she felt him move around and not come to meet with her she got more and more worried. He still talked with her through their bond, but he never spoke about anything related to the sect. They spoke only about... advancement and techniques.

She felt him approach the Wolf's Grove again, only this time he entered the city. She stood up as she followed him coming.

"What is it?" Erdania said from the corner of the room where she was doing a handstand.

“Ryun is coming... here?”

He landed on their balcony and Selia walked over, Erdania following close behind.

On the balcony was a cloaked figure, and she frowned. The man on their balcony didn't look like Ryun, he was taller, his skin tone darker. But inside her head, she felt him.

“Selia?” Erdania said slowly.

Selia tilted her head. “Ryun?”

He smiled, then pulled the hood of his head. His body shimmered, and then Ryun was standing there.

“Wow,” Erdania said. “That is useful.”

“It is,” Ryun agreed. “Hello, it's been a while.” He smiled at Erdania. She returned the smile, but hesitated, didn't move.

He looked around. “This is a nice little house you have here.”

Selia grimaced, she opened her mouth to try and explain, somehow. “Ryun—”

“—It's fine Selia,” Ryun said. “I am not here for that, the sect stuff will be dealt with soon. Today I am not here as a Sect Head. I am here as a... I don't even know what to call us. Dating? I guess that works, yet we haven't seen each other in three years. A lot changes in years.”

If she didn't know better, she would've thought that he might be insecure about their... relationship.

Erdania snorted. “Three years might be long for you, not so much for us.”

Ryun smiled. “Well, I did miss you. I don't think that I appreciated just how much I enjoyed both of your company until I was stuck in the Void with nothing to do.”

“Well,” Erdania glanced back at Selia. “Why don't you come in, let's celebrate your return. I got some new spirits for us to try out.” She raised her eyebrows at him.

Ryun chuckled and stepped forward.

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## Ryun

They walked through the Twilight Woods, Ryun guiding them away from everyone else. Last night was... nice. They spent the evening talking, drinking, laughing. It had been a long time since he had been that relaxed. But now was the time for something else—for advancement.

They stopped in a small grove, and Selia reached in front of her. A moment later, a chest materialized from her storage.

“Your reward,” she said.

He looked at it and then knelt. There was a kind of a lock on it, to his sense it was smooth, but it appeared as a black hole to his eyes. A circle of Void Essence. He placed his hand on it and it clicked open.

Ryun glanced at Selia and Erdania standing next to him, and then looked into the chest, picking up each item in turn.

Eternal Elixir of Void	Drinking this elixir will boost the effectiveness of your Void Aspect by 100x for 1 hour.
Eternal Elixir of Pure Willpower	Drinking this elixir will replenish your willpower to full and increase its effectiveness by 100x for 1 hour.
Eternal Drought of Path Perk Upgrade	Drinking the drought will improve the perk of your choice to the tier equal to the Eternal tier nine Cultivation Realm Evolution choice.

<b>Ring of Full Reflection</b>	<p>+1500 to Endurance +1500 to Vitality</p> <p>The Ring of Full Reflection stores the damage your body has suffered and allows you to reflect the full extent of the wound suffered (the damage will scale to target) onto a target. Able to store three instances of damage. Each instance can only be used once every 10 days.</p>
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Inheritance of the Smith	Using this item will show you visions of the greatest currently dead Smith of the Infinite Realm.
Essence of Sun and Moon	Using this item will allow you to create a miniaturized copy of the light source. When created you will be able to set the time of night and day cycle. The tier of the created source Essence will depend on the area where it was created.

<b>Focus of Indomitable Might</b>	<p>+1600 to Wisdom +1600 to Intelligence</p> <p>This focus allows you to channel techniques or abilities, through it. Techniques channeled through the focus will have their effectiveness increased by 300% and their Qi cost reduced by 50%. Abilities channeled through will have their effectiveness increased by 300% and their cooldowns reduced by 50%. Every third instance of focused technique or ability will have an increased effect. Techniques will be 600% more effective and have their cost reduced by 90%, and abilities will have their effectiveness increased by 600% and cooldown reduced by 90%. The focus can also fire a blast of concentrated energy (energy depends on your highest tiered Essence) which will deal damage equal to 25% of your wisdom or intelligence, whichever is highest.</p>
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There were a few focuses in Zenker's storage, though this one seemed like it was a lot more suited for him. He had tried them out though, not all techniques or abilities could be used effectively through a focus. But most of

his could. It was a glove like attachment, made out of dark blue coiling metal link with a gem—the focus—placed in the middle. Most of those in Zenker’s ring were in the shape of a staff or scepter. This one was like the ones that Erik Ornn had on his palms.

The ring that he had gotten was better in his opinion. A true weapon for someone like him. He could survive damage that would kill others, and the ring seemed to transfer not the damage but the wound. Could he let someone blow his head off, then use the ring to copy that wound, blow their head off in return? He was going to need to test it out.

The elixirs were good, but Zenker had many equally as powerful. The two other objects were smooth spheres. The smith one was going to be very useful, knowledge about smithing with Essence was priceless if he was going to improve with Bright Star. The second one was for his territory, he was certain. He had some plans for it, that he didn’t have quite a chance to do yet. But he did feel like he had a... space, inside of his soul. Small, smaller than his storage, the size of a box. But he did feel like he could expand it if he feed it something, and he did have an idea about what that something could be.

He was going to wait before he used anything though, until he advanced. He had a plan.

“Good rewards,” Erdania commented.

And they were, but he had a wealth of things just as good.

He placed it all in his storage and then looked at the two of them. “Before I advance, I have gifts for you.”

They tilted their heads at the exact same moment, which nearly made him chuckle. “Gifts?” Erdania asked.

Ryun nodded and pulled out a small chest for her. Erdania took it slowly, then opened it. Inside were three potions, the same as the ones that he had given to Tali. He had debated what else to get her, but he knew that she didn’t need much. There were also three Essence Crystals, each holding a significant amount of the tier 9 Essence of Gravity. Then there was an elixir, a Class removing potion, one of two that he had. They only worked on Classes that were less than three tiers and of rarity below legendary, but he knew that her Class just like his fit in that category. The last item was a pair of gloves, eternal item, which increased the effects of the wearer’s strength by 500%

when worn for non-power use of her stats. It didn't boost the strength at the source, just the destination. So, her other powers would not benefit from the boost, physical attacks without any powers. They also stored portions of the force inflicted and could then unleash a powerful attack.

Erdania looked the contents over, while Selia looked over her shoulder.

"Oh," Erdania said slowly. "This is..."

"Where did you find this?" Selia asked.

Ryun explained about Zenker, and his storage ring.

Both of them were shocked, but before they could say anything more, he pulled out another chest for Selia.

She got the same three potions as Erdania and Tali had, plus a potion that increased willpower effects, similar to the one that Ryun had gotten as his reward. An eternal item, a small circlet that increased the wearer's speed of thought and boosted intelligence. And lastly, he gave her a small fruit. The **Fruit of Laqruid's Physical Legacy**, he had thought long about what to do with it. In the end it would probably do little for him other than mess his body up. He didn't think that his body was at all compatible with his. He wasn't even closely related to flesh Essence. Selia on the other hand was still flesh and blood, though her blood was Sanguine Silver, it was still blood.

She looked through everything and then stopped when she reached the fruit.

"What is this?" She raised her eyes to meet his.

He explained where he found it, and then said the reasons why he chose it for her.

"It will remake your body, but it will also—I think—help you reach Ascended Realm."

She blinked at that. "How would you know that... you have your inspiration, already?"

Ryun shrugged. "I do, I figured it out while training in the Empire."

Both Selia and Erdania blinked at that. "And you didn't think to advance before fighting the Dome Leader," Selia asked, her eyes narrowed.

Ryun saw Erdania look away, and he waved his hand. "A mistake, which I realize now. I fell victim to the basest Cultivator sins. Arrogance and

desire to become stronger. Fighting the Dome Leader at Evolved would guarantee better choices at Ascended.

Selia closed her eyes and shook her head. "I... thank you for this, but... if there is only one, maybe Erdania would be a better fit. She relies on her physical body far more than I do; this would help her more than me."

Ryun glanced at Erdania, saw her shake her head slightly, barely enough for anyone to see. But she knew that he would sense it. He gave her a small smile.

"Erdania, we agreed that there should be no secrets between us. That doesn't apply only to me and the two of you, but between you two too."

Selia frowned and looked from Ryun to Erdania, then back. And then she realized what they were talking about.

"You have your Ascended inspiration too," Selia whispered. "How long?"

Erdania looked away but then forced herself to look back at Selia. "A few decades, I... I don't want to advance without you."

Selia dropped her head. "So instead, you let me hold you back?" She whispered.

"No, no, you are not holding me back. I just... I love advancing together, I didn't feel held back. It matters more to me that we are together than to just go forward by myself."

Selia didn't move, so then Erdania got closer and pulled her into an embrace, she whispered into her ear, telling her that she was sorry and that she shouldn't have done it.

"Both of you," Selia said as she raised her head and looked at Ryun. "I guess that there are some things that the two of you have more in common than me."

Ryun walked up to her and put his hand on her cheek, Erdania still holding her. "Focus on our bond, do you feel what I feel?"

Selia closed her eyes, it still didn't come naturally to her. He could feel her emotions change as she felt his. The three of them are not the same people, they each had different things in common with one another. A reason why Ryun even believed that they could work. He loved his talks with Selia, theorizing and speculating. He loved that Erdania was free spirited and did

what she wanted when she wanted, just like him. He just... didn't know how to put it all into words, he wasn't good at talking. But he could let Selia feel how he felt, and hope that she understood.

And she did.

"Right," Selia said as she took a step back and composed herself.

"We'll help you through this," Ryun said. "I don't doubt that you will figure it out soon and that fruit will help."

She nodded in agreement. "Thank you."

"Now, I'd like you to watch over me," Ryun said as he pulled out the second fruit he picked from the tree. The **Fruit of Jikharuud's Insight** appeared in his hand. "There is something that I need to do before I advance."