

## Power

The preparations for their trip were all finally finished. They gathered in the courtyard of the palace in Consequence. Ryun stood to the side, saying his goodbyes.

“You could still come with us, there is time,” he said, though he knew that there was little chance of changing their mind.

Erdania shook her head. “I don’t think that the Ethereal would help me get stronger much. Besides, the source of Worldstone is here, I need to focus on it before I advance again.”

“And I need to spend time in the forge,” Selia added. “Creation is part of my Qi, and is ingrained in the core of my Class.”

Ryun nodded, they had already discussed this so he wasn’t surprised. “I will miss you,” he said instead.

This was why they worked so well together. They understood each other, and they didn’t need to constantly be in each other’s presence.

And as much as he would’ve liked for them to be there, he knew that what he had to do in the Ethereal would be hard. He was going back to his roots in some ways. They embraced for a long few seconds, and then stepped back. With one last smile for them, he turned and nodded at Ereclaw who walked over to him as they headed to the center of the courtyard.

“I will need your help in there,” Ryun said. “For a while at least.”

Ereclaw growled and inclined his head. “Of course.”

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“Visit my mother, if you have the time,” Nayra whispered to Anrosh.

“You sure that I should intrude?” Anrosh asked.

Nayra gave her a smile. “Definitely,” she answered. “Mother likes you. Probably more than any other of her in-laws.”

“Does she really?” Anrosh tilted her head.

“Would I lie to you?” Nayra asked.

Anrosh narrowed her eyes, but didn't say anything. Nayra didn't lie, of course. Her mother did like her best. Which why Nayra hoped that she could help her. Her mother had been sitting in front of her father's tree almost every day, barely doing anything. Not even father Olem was able to get her to do something else for more than a few hours a day.

Anrosh was young in comparison, but she understood her mother's pain.

“And you,” Nayra turned to look at Kri. “You keep your mother safe for me, okay?”

“Of course,” Kri said.

Nayra gave her a grave look, then nodded.

She glanced away, noting that Ryun and Ereclaw had made their goodbyes. She took a deep breath and released it slowly.

“I’m off then,” she said.

Anrosh pulled her close. “Come back to me,” she whispered.

“I plan to.”

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Zach stood to the side, near Naha and Hiro who were engaged in a quiet conversation. He looked around, saw the people from the Sect coming to see them off. There were a few groups gathered around, everyone saying their own goodbyes.

He turned his attention to Naha speaking with Hiro.

“Make sure to stay safe,” Naha said. “Don’t go around taking unnecessary risks.”

Hiro smiled at her. “I won’t, but I’m not a child anymore,” he told her. He was used to her mothering by now.

“Most people are children to me,” Naha told him, her hand reaching up to tweak his ear.

He grimaced and pushed her hand away, but his smile didn’t dip.

“Keep up with your training,” Zach added.

Hiro glanced in his direction and his expression sobered. “I will,” he nodded.

Zach reached up and squeezed his shoulder, then glanced around. He noticed that most of the others were finished with their own goodbyes and he took a deep breath, then stepped up to the center. The others followed. Ryun gave one last wave to his partners, and headed his way with Ereclaw following. Nayra hugged Anrosh and Kri then did the same.

Soon, the three of them met with Zach and Naha in the middle.

“We ready?” Zach asked.

Ryun nodded. “We are.”

Zach changed his hand into his Time Blade form and focused as he activated **Gate Fissure** cutting open a gate in space, one leading to the Ethereal Realm.

With one last look around, he stepped through, and the other four followed close behind.

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The Sage of the Frosted Moon sat on top of his mountain where no wind blew, where no time passed, where only Cold ruled and Moonlight danced. His mind was focused and his will sharp. The plane of the Frosted Moon trembled under his might, as it was pulled into the real world. Space shook, and Time fled beneath the will of **HE OF THE**

**FROSTED MOON'S GAZE.** There was no will that could oppose his, no one who followed the same path as him.

He opened himself up fully, unleashing wisdom of a timeless age, a full mastery of a Sage of an Aspect. The moon above him shone with pale blue light, and mirrors woven out of the finest strands of Moonlight fashioned frozen mirrors all around him. The world changed as he painted his illusion of the **Frosted World**, as all things in that world came under his control. He knew that it was possible, he understood that something had changed in the world. Time tasted different, what little of it could still touch his realm.

He spread his will and his power into his Aspect, forcing his idea upon it. Voices rose inside of his mind, but all were insignificant, none practiced a pure path of the Frosted Moon Aspect. It did not take him more than a moment to realize what they were, the voices of those whose power was close to his, but not identical. Those on the paths of Cold or the Moon. It did not matter, it wouldn't have mattered even if they were trying to wrestle him for the control of the same Aspect.

**HE OF THE FROSTED MOON'S GAZE** was the Sovereign of this plane, of this Aspect. He let himself permeate through all of the plane, his will coming down on and extinguishing all other voices. He pushed all of those impurities out of his plane and then squeezed.

His intent and meaning seeped into the foundations of the Aspect, shaping it for all time. To the frozen light of the moon he added the sharpness of his will, mirrors that could cut anything. To the coldness that could stop time itself, he added a quality of an infinite progress and existence separate from Time itself. A frozen moment that lasted forever.

The purpose of knowledge and calm, of mind that could not be shattered, all of it seeped into the Aspect.

And so, it was.

CONGRATULATIONS WORLD SECOND FEAT  
ACCOMPLISHED:

New titles available:

**The Second Dao—Way of Aspect**

**The Way of Frosted Moon**

**Rime of the Moon**

Titles		
<b>The Second Dao—Way of Aspects</b>	Be the second in the world to give shape and form to an Aspect of Essence; harness and create the Way of an Aspect.	+5% to all base stats, 1200 Immortal Essence

<b>The Way of Frosted Moon</b>	Establish a Way of Frosted Moon, formalizing the rules of the Aspect.	+10% to all base stats, Formalization of Frosted Moon (World Change), 1000 Immortal Essence
<b>Rime of the Moon</b>	Your achievement, drive, or effort is recognized.	+100 to base intelligence, <b>Rime of the Moon</b> (Grand Perk), 10 Celestial Essence

It was done.

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Berion looked down from the parapet as Kael spoke with the yeti—Ra’azel. His arrival had changed things. He was teaching them more about his runes, was gifting them with his creations. Others were eager to gain more power, they knew that they needed it. All that Berion could think was of the price.

Ra’azel had Kael’s ear, and even now Berion wondered what it was that he whispered to him. What plots and ideas was he giving to his friend. Kael had changed since his first encounter with this being, it was clear to Berion. But their goals had not changed, and so Berion left it alone.

Now... this new plan of Kael's worried him. They went after the people that had done terrible things, and yet... was there no redemption possible? What they spoke about now was going after someone who has not done anything heinous in centuries. Berion didn't know if the past could be so easily forgotten, which was why he hadn't said anything.

Despite it all, Kael had not changed their goals, only targets and timelines. All on the suggestions of Ra'azel. Berion didn't like it at all.

Destabilizing the world would take a lot of blood, it would take a lot of death and sacrifices. Innocent lives, Berion knew that. His hand reached up to his neck, rubbing at the phantom feeling of a collar around it.

It was not the lack of freedom that haunted his dreams the most about that time. It was that he just didn't know better. He had been raised to believe that being a slave was his purpose, that serving others was all that his life was meant to be. That he was worthless.

He could not accept that. He could not accept leaders pushing their ideas on others, giving the illusion of choice. It was a fate worse than death. If collapsing all structures and systems was what was necessary for people to truly have a choice, then he would see that through.

But Ra'azel worried him. He had seen the yeti cast glances in Berion's direction, his ringed eyes eerie and piercing. He had been studying Berion just as much as he had done the same.

Something caught Berion's attention, something coming from far away and he turned, frowning. He looked into the distance and saw nothing. He tilted his head, then shook it, he had to have been imagining things. He looked back and saw that Kael and Ra'azel were missing, no longer standing in the courtyard.

He grimaced but then turned around and found himself face to face with Ra'azel. He took a step back, his will ready to pull on his skills.

“Jumpy, aren’t we,” the yeti smiled, showing his sharp teeth.

Berion took a deep breath and calmed himself. The yeti was a tall figure, just a little bit taller than Berion. He was an intimidating presence to most, but not to Berion. It was his eyes that shook him the most. They looked at him as if he was nothing but a meal.

“I did not expect you,” Berion said. “That is all.”

The yeti tilted his head. “Understandable.”

Again, Berion felt something in a distance and turned his head to look. Something at the edge of his senses was... familiar.

“Hm... what is this?” The yeti asked.

Berion glanced at him, seeing him pull out a device and look at it. *So he senses something too.*

“Oh,” the yeti said. “Another one, I must see this.”

Before Berion could react, the yeti carved a rune in front of himself and space bent screaming at the intrusion. Berion grimaced, but the sensation he felt intensified as the yeti teleported. It made him stumble forward, then reach out to catch himself on the wall next to him. His will thrummed inside his entire being, and unwittingly his skills honed in to the source. Space was everywhere, and distance meant nothing to Berion.

There was something there, something that called to him. Without thinking Berion slammed his will into the space where yeti had just stood,

strands of Aspect of Space reached out and touched him, then pulled him through.

He landed in a frozen land, fell to one knee immediately as the weight of another will billowed in the distance. He raised his head and saw a frozen mountain stretching high into the sky. A frozen river wrapping around the stone as if the land itself was pulled up and frozen with everything that had once occupied it.

The yeti was a few steps ahead of him, his device raised high, his attention fully on what was happening. Berion knelt there unnoticed, a noise rising inside of his mind.

As the will in front of him rose and spread to a crescendo, the corners of Berion's mind realized some part of what was happening.

The will on top of the mountain stilled and moonlight froze into mirrors, a song of power exploded and then everything went white. For a moment Berion lost all sense of the world, of time, and existence. Only Space remained to anchor him and he dropped deep into the Aspect of Space, his connection with the Plane widening inside of him.

The noise rattling in his mind became voices, ideas and desires. Slowly, he heard them for what they were, understandings of Space. Some clashed with his own understanding of it, while others were in tune.

Then something changed on the mountain and the song quieted and disappeared. But inside of Berion a new song was being born. His will shook and space trembled all around him.

The yeti turned and noticed him, his eyes narrowing.

"Oh, this is perfect," he smiled a terrible smile at Berion and approached. His hand rose a rune carved into space that pulsed and

didn't disappear. The yeti brought his hand closer to Berion, almost as if he wanted to brand the rune upon his forehead. Fear blossomed inside of Berion's being, flashes of his old life, of branding and collars. Berion's hand twitched, a finger carving a rune that infused him. A teaching of the yeti, but useful and powerful. He felt his will surge as his soul cried out in pain. All of Space trembled and pulsed with Berion's fear, and Berion turned his growing will on it all. Some of the voices inside of his head exclaimed in horror, others in confusion, his will took hold of them all and forced them to aid him.

For Berion, space was freedom. It was knowledge that he could never be trapped again, that he could be anywhere at any time. That distance meant nothing to him, or that it meant everything.

Acting almost on instinct, guided by the after wave of what he had just witnessed Berion acted and Space answered.

As Ra'azel's hand drew closer, as the rune almost touched his forehead, the space in between the hand and Berion wavered. Space filled the gap, and the distance that was short increased.

The yeti frowned his hand moving forward, almost lunging, but Berion knew that it would never touch him unless he wanted it to. Berion rose, and Space shuddered.

"Ah," Ra'azel stepped back, the rune disappearing from his hand. He smiled at Berion. "I wished simply to help."

Berion narrowed his eyes, he opened his mouth to speak, but was interrupted. Something was happening on top of the mountain.

"We should leave before he notices us," Ra'azel said, his hand rising to carve a rune.

Berion would not allow his power to touch him, so he focused his skills and will. The Space filled him completely, and it answered. He grabbed hold of Ra'azel, seeing the yeti's eyes widen, and he ripped them both through space. Returning them home.

Ra'azel took a step back from Berion, neither of them breaking their gaze from the other.

“Ber! Teacher!” Kael called, the beat of his wings forcing them both to look away. “What happened?”

Berion opened his mouth, but Ra'azel spoke first.

“Nothing to worry about, young Kael,” Ra'azel said, his eyes sliding to glance at Berion. “All is well.”

Berion didn't answer. In the corner of his eyes, he had new notifications.

CONGRATULATIONS WORLD THIRD FEAT  
ACCOMPLISHED:

New titles available:

**The Third Dao—Way of Aspect**

**The Way of Space**

Titles		
<b>The Third Dao—Way of Aspects</b>	Be the third in the world to give shape and form to an Aspect of Essence; harness and create the Way of an Aspect.	+5% to all base stats, 1000 Immortal Essence
<b>The Way of Space</b>	Establish a Way of Space, formalizing the rules of the Aspect.	+10% to all base stats, Formalization of Space (World Change), 1000 Immortal Essence

What Berion knew was only that the world had changed. He closed his eyes, and felt for the first time that the Space around him offered true freedom.