

## **New Eden 721**

### Chapter 721 Different Person

The revelation slammed into Ulrick's mind like a sledgehammer. She was dying?

Since when? Why did she look so healthy if she was ill?

It made no sense.

"My lady? Surely you jest. How could someone so powerful and young be on the verge of death's door?"

Selena sighed, patting the bed next to her.

"Come. Sit down. I will explain all to you. But this need not leave this room. Understood?"

"Of course, my love," Ulrick said, feeling his heart tug.

He sat down, and as she spoke to him, his eyes filled with tears.

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On the western side of the manor, in the guardian wing, Astaroth was finally waking up from his partial coma. His head was ringing, and his body felt like it was covered in a blanket of lead.

He opened his eyes to an unfamiliar ceiling, for the umpteenth time in the last months, and sighed in annoyance.

"When will this stop happening?" he grumbled, causing Phoenix, who was a few feet away, to jump to her feet and rush to his side.

"Finally, you are awake. You had us worried."

Her eyes looked relieved that he was okay. But they still contained traces of worry.

"What happened? How did I get here? Is Rodney fine?" Astaroth asked, as his memories of what happened before he collapsed came back to him.

"Yes, Rodney is fine. He just left the room, seeking an audience with the Matriarch. Something about paying his dues. As for what happened, you will have to fill us in, because we have no idea. What did you do, and better yet, how did you do it?"

Astaroth frowned at her, unsure of what she meant. Then it clicked.

He had brought Rodney back from death. Although priests could perform this, if they were strong enough, it was unheard of from a person with no divine patron.

"I'm... Not sure? It's kind of hazy," Astaroth said, scratching the side of his head.

He dived into himself, trying to see if the soul shard of Geminae was still present next to his, and saw it floating peacefully, orbiting his, along with the others. But something was odd.

It had grown.

Where it had been no bigger than the size of a bead, before, it now took up the same space as Luna's soul. But were souls supposed to grow?

He pushed that line of questioning for later since he had no answers himself. He would have to ask someone more proficient in the matter.

Either Solomon, or better yet, Nemus.

But that could wait.

For now, they needed to leave this darned place. It seemed the longer they stayed in Themiscus, the more their problems piled up.

"Let's just call it instinct, in the meantime, and come back to that. First, we need to get our shit and get the fuck away from here. I feel like the longer we stay, the more the council will try to fault us."

Phoenix giggled at his words. It certainly did feel this way.

"Alright. Tell me when you are ready to get up, and I'll have Rodney fetched for us. Then we can regroup with the two parties and leave this accursed place. I hate it here anyway," Phoenix said, grimacing.

It went to say a lot, for a woman to hate a place ruled by women. But he could understand her.

So many things felt wrong in their way of handling things.

"I'll be fine in an hour? Maybe. Let's give Rodney the time he needs with his mother, and we can go from there."

Phoenix nodded. She could agree to that.

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Toward the center of the manor, not too far from the interior courtyard they had been in, Rodney was waiting in a side room, which looked somewhat like the ones they had in Stellar Woodlands, where they would receive dignitaries.

He had asked for an audience with the Matriarch, and after confirming she would see him, they had brought him here to wait.

But he had been waiting for fifteen minutes now, and still no news of when she would see him.

As Rodney got up to ask the guards outside when she could see him, a knock at the door interrupted his movements. Immediately following the knock, the door opened, and three people came in.

The first one was Ulrick, his father, followed closely by the Matriarch, Selena, his mother.

But the third person, he hadn't expected to see. It was his younger half-sister, Claudia.

She smiled so warmly when she saw him and was tempted to run out from behind the Matriarch and rush into Rodney's arms.

Even though they were from different fathers, Claudia had been somewhat of an outcast herself, back when he was still in the manor, and she had only him to befriend. This had made them as close, if not closer, than true siblings.

For her, Rodney barely looked different, aside from his larger stature, as he had gained much muscle mass since she last saw him. But for him, the shock was much bigger.

Last he had seen Claudia, she was six. And that was fifteen years ago.

She now looked sublime, and all traces of her once skinny and malnourished body had disappeared. Her body was finely built, but showed no trace of abuse or mistreatment.

Rodney couldn't help but feel tears going up in his eyes, but he pushed them back down. Now was not the time to show weakness.

Looking back at his mother, Rodney bowed and spoke up.

"Matriarch Lorhen. It has been some time. How fare you?"

The woman looked at him with a stony gaze as the guards closed the doors. Once the doors were closed, and they were left alone, her gaze softened a bit, taking Rodney by surprise.

"Rodney. My son. It has been fifteen years, I know. But can you not call me mother?"

Rodney almost stumbled to his ass, wondering who this woman before him was. It certainly wasn't the cold and distant mother he remembered.

"I... Uh... My apologies, Matr—Mother. It was my understanding that you preferred your kids to stay formal."

The Matriarch giggled lightly.

"I do, when people are around that can hear. But we are alone and undisturbed here. Ahh. You have grown so much, my boy. My first born. You make me proud. You prove that our ways need to change, and that they can."

Rodney stared at her with wide eyes.

'What the fuck is happening?!' he shouted in his mind.

Chapter 722 Ripples On The Surface

Rodney couldn't grasp what was happening right before his very eyes. This woman before him, who had never looked at him affectionately, was now telling him she was proud of him?

This same woman who had banished him from the family because he lacked magical talent? The woman who had treated him like less than nothing?

'There has to be a reason for her actions. A scheme. Something. She would never treat me well without a reason.'

While Rodney's thoughts scrambled around in his head, Selena looked at him with sorrow. She could guess his thoughts, even without having to read them.

Of course, she knew he was right. She had been a terrible mother.

All for the sake of her house's prosperity. Such were the ways of Themiscus' high society.

But the truth was different. She had never forgiven herself for banishing him.

Even Ulrick knew her true feelings had always been hidden. He had so often found her crying alone in her chambers, in the days following the banishment.

In the beginning, she had no such intention. But when the tormenting had started between her children, and Rodney never gained the ability to fight back, she couldn't think of another way.

And defending him openly would have caused internal strife, and a whiplash on the Lorhens. She hadn't banished him from hatred.

She had banished him so the torment would stop. In truth, Selena had always trusted her son would grow up to be great.

When he was born, and they found out that his mana lobe, which was already formed, a rare thing even in Themiscan society, was calcified, she had looked for solutions everywhere.

Selena had even called for a seer to predict Rodney's future, hoping that the situation would remedy itself. That was how she found out Rodney would someday be a great warrior and one of humanity's stalwarts.

But his magic had never come back to him over the years. Making him an outcast in his own home.

Hearing her husband hear that Rodney had died today had made her realize that her choices concerning her firstborn had been wrong all along. Even if sending him away was the safe path, she should have defended him more and supported him after he left.

Instead, she had left her baby to fend for himself in a cruel world, leaving him with the thought that she did not love him.

Thinking about this, Selena could feel tears streaming down her face.

Rodney noticed this, and his mouth dropped.

"Mother... Why are you crying?" Rodney asked, his voice cracking.

With a soft sob, she looked at her eldest son and asked, "Will you ever forgive me?"

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In another manor of Themiscus, the Casovan manor, house to the head Matriarch's family, another situation altogether was happening.

In a meeting room not unlike the one Rodney was in, along with his father, mother, and half-sister, the head Matriarch was meeting with representatives of five different families.

"Head Matriarch! You cannot be seriously letting him go after he threatened our leading cast so easily! This is a scandal!" A young woman with fiery red hair exclaimed.

"The representative of the Lagans is right! We can't let them go scot-free! This is an affront to our glorious kingdom and its venerable founder! They must be punished!" another woman growled, her purple eyes glowing with disdain.

The commotion only rose as the women tried talking over each other until a loud bang interrupted their screaming.

\*Bang!\*

"Enough! Contain yourselves, ladies. You are still in the presence of our highest council member. Don't you dare forget that."

Edelbart looked at the women, who all theoretically held more power than him, in their everyday society, and scoffed at their scowls. This was his turf, his house.

They might wield enough power to make him bend outside of these walls. But not inside.

The women all looked at him with disgust.

"Head Matriarch, when will you tame that rowdy dog of yours? How dare he bare his teeth at us?"

But the woman immediately regretted her words, as a sudden shove of telekinesis slammed her into her seat, the pressure mounting to the point where she was suffocating.

Already, she was clawing at her throat, desperate to get some air into her lungs.

"Watch your words, child. He may be a man, but he still is my husband, and Guardian, as well as our kingdom's most powerful and respected warrior. Who are you, to call him a dog? You, who are only fresh out of diapers only a few decades back. Talk to him like this again, and your head will roll, be it by my hand, or his."

The woman was turning blue, her eyes bulging, as she nodded her head in panic.

Releasing her spell, the head Matriarch watched as the woman collapsed on the table, gasping for air frantically.

"Now. As I was saying earlier. I know how your Matriarchs feel about this already. But what else are we to do? Go to war?"

"I don't think you realize what you are asking of this kingdom. None of you, or your mistresses, have seen war. You have no idea the toll it takes on a country. No idea the toll it takes on its people.

"Go back home. Tell your mistresses to pipe down. We can take our revenge in the Inter-Alliance Military Exercises. Until then, you are not to touch a hair on the envoys of Stellar Woodlands. Understood?"

The women reluctantly nodded, too scared to speak back after what had just happened.

The head Matriarch rarely snapped. But her wrath was not something anyone could take on.

As they teleported away, going back to their respective manors, the Head Matriarch sighed heavily, sinking in her chair.

As much as she had looked dignified and powerful until now, she now looked weak and tired.

Her Guardian, Edelbart, walked beside her, putting a hand on her shoulder.

She delicately caressed it.

"When was the last time the Council agreed on matters completely? Decades? Centuries, maybe? I don't remember. I'm tired, Edelbart," she said, sighing again.

Her husband leaned down, kissing her forehead.

Edelbart was not her first husband, as the woman was much older than people thought she was. And men in Themiscus, although they lived long, did not live as long as the women.

This was due to the balance of power. But he knew she had long outlived her peers.

It was no wonder she was tired. For her to even live this long was a testament to her true power.

"Maybe it's time to retire? Leave your place to someone else who's younger?"

She chuckled lightly, almost causing her to cough.

"And leave the country in a state of near war? Over my dead body. These women are too rash. They have forgotten the true values of Themiscus.

"I wish our founder would come here and educate them as she did the last generation. They would see the err in their ways. But that is wishful thinking. Let us just go rest. I am tired."

"Very well, my love," Edelbart said, helping her up and walking her to her chambers.

'I only hope your statement doesn't turn out true. So many of these young and feisty witches would love to trample on your grave...'