

RE: DEITY - THE BREATH OF CREATION

1.7 It's About Respect

Elvira was trying to hold a meeting of the gods. Considering all the different personalities, domains, and ages involved, it was going about as well as one might expect. Which was to say, it was utter chaos.

She now understood what Father meant when He said something was “like herding cats.”

“Put him down! Pay attention!” she snapped, slamming her hands on the table and resisting the urge to throttle the youngest; Aerial, the wind goddess. She was currently using her powers to lift the god of earth into the air, the bulky, stone-skinned man giggling like a child as he was flown over the round marble table Elvira was trying, and failing, to hold the meeting at.

“Let them have their fun,” her brother, Alexander, rumbled from where he lay curled up on the floor. Elvira’s tails thrashed in agitation, her feathers ruffling as she watched the god of fire chase the goddess of water up to Alexander’s form, his serpentine body towering over them. He regarded the young deities

with a look of amusement as they clambered up onto him, laughing the whole way and leaving wet and burning handprints on his pristine white scales.

“Hey! Get down from there!” Elvira protested, to which Alexander just shook his head, seeming more amused than anything else.

“Leave them be, sister. It’s not like we can control them anyways, and they’re just having a bit of fun.” Reika giggled, hiding her mouth behind one hand. She and Keilan were chatting over tea, unperturbed by the chaos happening around them. With deliberate slowness she lifted her teacup, narrowly avoiding the two wrestling spirits – not true gods, but powerful enough as it were to have been invited – that came crashing through the space between her and Keilan.

“It’s not about control, it’s about respect! Just look at the state of my palace!” Elvira cried, gesturing wildly to the palace she’d built for herself. It had been modelled after something she’d seen Father make for His own home, though right now it was in absolute tatters. The domed ceiling had holes in it, sunlight streaming down to the floor, and the tall white marble pillars that dotted the interior were cracked and crumbling. Scorch marks, patches of ice, and deep gouges marred the walls, glass from shattered windows strewn haphazardly across the floor.

And the floors...by Father, the floors...

It had been the only truly artistic thing in the entire palace, a beautiful mosaic that she'd made over the course of a few hundred centuries piece-by-piece. She wasn't the particularly creative type, so it had been a chore and a half to make, but it was still something she had been proud of. Now she hardly wanted to look at it, torn to shreds as it was. Sure, it would be fairly easy to remake with her power, but that was beside the point! There were only thirty gods in the entire Four Realms, and even fewer powerful spirits – Spirit Kings, they were coming to be called – so why couldn't they get along long enough to have a simple freaking meeting?! Or even focus on one thing for that long?!

"Why *did* you call us here?" Keilan asked, shooting an annoyed glance at the wrestling Spirit Kings. Unlike Reika he hadn't pulled his tea away in time, and now had the brownish liquid staining his dark robes. A simple wave of his hand wicked the moisture out of his clothes.

"I wanted to talk about the future of our Realms," Elvira groaned, clenching and unclenching her fists, tails thrashing in agitation. "Father is making waves with how much He's doing, and we need to be prepared for the changes. We can't just have thirty gods running around doing whatever they want, making an absolute mess of things!" she all but shouted, fighting back the urge to lash out.

"Easy, Elvira," Alexander rumbled, lifting his head. "We're not here to control others – we *can't*, such is the nature of free will."

“Shut it!” She snapped back, glaring at her brother. He blinked in surprise, then scowled. She knew she was being harsh right now, but some part of her didn’t care. “I know we can’t control them! That’s not the *Father-Damned point!*”

“What is the point?” Reika asked softly, placing herself between Elvira and Alexander. The gesture was not lost on her, her little sister was trying to mediate. Elvira held her gaze for a moment, then looked up to meet Alexander’s eyes. His rainbow-colored pupils bored into her own eyes, demanding she back down, but she had no give in her today.

“There is no such thing as action without consequence.” She said simply. The words hung heavy in the air between the four of them, the weight of *truth* giving them *power*. Even the younger deities slowed in their chaos to shoot her a look. There was something burning in her chest as she stood there, daring anyone to challenge her, the words bubbling up from within her and invoking...*something* intangible. Keilan shifted in his seat, squaring his shoulders and staring at Elvira.

“Of course not.” Alexander growled.

“Then why are you acting like there *is*.” She ground out, stepping forward challengingly, finding a bit of satisfaction in the way Alexander pulled his head

back a little. Reika laid a gentle hand on her chest, and she looked back at her sister. The green-haired girl had a pleading look in her eyes, and for a brief moment she considered pushing forward and picking this fight. But the moment passed, and she turned away with a click of her tongue.

“Elvira...” Reika started, but she didn’t pay her much heed, instead turning to the assembled gods. They were watching her warily, the chaos and destruction they’d wreaked at a temporary pause. Absently she realized she was flexing her power, a harsh white mist radiating from her in waves, rolling out to pound against the world around her like the tide against sand. She did nothing to restrain herself, letting it flow.

“I am going on a flight. This mess had better be picked up by the time I get back.” She said, unable to hide the anger in her tone as she gestured to her trashed palace. Again, she could fix it in a moment if she wished, but that wasn’t the *point*. The deities flinched as she turned away, stalking toward the entrance. A niggling feeling tickled the back of her head and she glanced back, meeting Alexander’s eyes once more.

“*Is this about the state of your palace?*” He asked, the message mental and inaudible to those assembled. And that was the only reason she did not whirl on him for the, frankly, *stupid* question.

“*If that is truly what you think of me, then I need to revise my opinion of you **brother**.*” She sent back, stalking out of the front door. The massive

archway that was the main entrance opened up to a large veranda, complete with a million steps leading up from the base of the Holy Mountain – a number that only continued to grow, as the Mountain and the Realms did. Before her lay her demesne, land as far as the eye could see; lakes the size of oceans, rivers wider than mountains, and valleys deeper than canyons the least of the grand features of the Heaven Realm.

“Sister,” Keilan called, stepping out beside her. “I did not know you thought so deeply about this; I had expected this to be an ego thing, if I am honest. It is surprising.”

“Now is not the time, Keilan,” she snapped, not bothering to spare him a glance.

“You’re right. I apologize. Sometimes what my mouth says does not reflect what my heart means,” Keilan responded, and she paused, her anger stalled as she looked at him out of the corner of her eyes. His dark skin and dark hair shone in the light of the Realm Sun, his black robes tight and immaculate. In many ways the siblings were very different...but in just as many ways they were incredibly similar. What he said reflected what she felt all too well. “I’m afraid I cannot stay. Another spirit has taken on the mantle of Karma, and I will need to instruct them in the laws of it to make use of them. With the incoming mortal races Mother keeps promising, I will need all the help I can get to manage things in the Karmic Realm. Reika will follow soon, too. She’s been itching to get back to that secret project of hers.”

“I see,” Elvira said, looking away.

“You do not. Whatever anger you feel is blinding you. Do not take that the wrong way,” he added hastily, clearly sensing the way she bristled at his statement. “In many ways, I think you and I have the same path ahead of us, as visually different as they may seem. We are the ones the Four Realms will look to for leadership, rather than guidance. ‘There is no action without consequence.’ It is a good line. Mind if I use it?”

“Feel free,” she grumbled.

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“...Sister, I don’t have the words to help you with...whatever you’re feeling right now, but I do understand. If you ever need someone to talk to, I am willing to listen.” Keilan said softly. She snorted.

“Sure, if I need to talk out my feelings like a pansy you’ll be the first I call,” she said, shooting him a forced smile to show she was just teasing. He laughed

and shoved her shoulder, darkness swirling up around him to take him back to the Karmic Realm.

“That’s the Elvira I know,” he said, and vanished with a small pop. Elvira frowned the moment he was gone, her anger swelling once more, wings spreading in response. With a single powerful leap she launched herself skyward, wings beating, each flap propelling her hundreds of miles. She didn’t know where she was going, her rage bleeding from her with the exertion of flying at maximum speed, only that she had to go *somewhere*.

Clouds whipped by beneath her, forests, only a mere few thousand years old, giving way to desert, then tundra, then back to forest again and again. The Heaven Realm contained all terrains within it; it was no paradise, but it was an ideal. It would not be utopia for those living within, that she knew, but it would be *good*.

Elvira screamed out her rage, voice cracking as she vented. With gritted teeth she folded her wings and plummeted to the earth below. Just before impact her wings flared, the wind catching her feathers and yanking her up just enough that her landing was as light as a feather. As much as she wanted to crater the land beneath her, she *couldn’t*. That she had stormed out of her own palace pissed her off enough, she didn’t need to throw a destructive tantrum like a child.

With a self-derisive snort she shook her head, looking out over the plains she had landed in, golden grasses coming up to reach her shoulders and waving in a gentle wind. The sun was unusually harsh here, beating down upon the land so hard it was a miracle the grass didn't light on fire. Somewhere off to her left a horse whinnied, undoubtedly disturbed by her sudden appearance, and she took a deep breath. What was she even looking for? What was she even trying to do?

"You're scaring the horses. What's got you all riled up?" an all-too-familiar voice said from her left. Elvira suppressed the relief that flooded her as she turned to look upon Father, hating that she felt like she was dependent upon His wisdom in her hour of need. She wouldn't bring up her plight, though. He was currently having a bit of His own fun, sitting atop a dappled grey mare with a cowboy hat on His head, a soft smile on His face but a look in His eyes that showed His seriousness.

"Sorry, Father," she apologized. "I needed to go out for a walk. Seems my wings led me here."

"Want to talk about it?" He asked. "I was just riding old Bella here one last time. She's getting too old to carry me."

“No. I’m ok,” she said automatically. Father continued to stare at her, His piercing green eyes that always made her feel like that little girl who made a mountain of white just because it was fun never leaving her face. “It’s just...I don’t know what to do. I was trying to be a leader, I think, and, well, all the new gods were being uncontrollable. I don’t have the words to explain it. I shouldn’t be as mad as I am.”

“You don’t have to explain it,” Father said, His horse trotting up beside her. The grey mare nibbled at Elvira’s wings, just her lips brushing her feathers, a feeling that made her crack a smile despite herself. “Hey, wanna see something cool?”

“What?” Elvira asked, confused by the abrupt change in topic. Father reached out, holding something, and she took it without even thinking. An ice-cube now sat in her hands, melting in the intense sunlight.

“That’s cool.” He said, face carefully blank. Elvira blinked, looked at the ice-cube, and snorted despite herself, tossing it aside.

“That was terrible.” She said, and He cracked a goofy smile that told her everything she needed to know about what was coming.

“Like paper, it was tear-able,” Father said, creating and ripping a sheet of paper just to prove a point.

“Stop.”

“Can you jump higher than a mountain?”

“Yes. I can fly, Father,”

“Of course you can! Mountains don’t jump.”

“Dad,”

“Want my advice? Never trust stairs. When they’re not up to something, they’re bringing you down.”

“Please.”

“Wanna know what the best gift is? Broken drums! You can’t beat them.”

“Enough with the puns.”

“Ok. This one isn’t a pun, technically. What’s red and bad for your teeth? A brick.”

“I can literally eat bricks if I wanted. Why are you doing this to me?”

“I find it funny. Or, in this case, *punny*.” Even though she hated every second of Father’s proclaimed ‘dad jokes,’ Elvira still found herself laughing at the abruptness of it all. Especially the cheesy grin Father gave every time He spouted one, eyes shining in amusement and clearly enjoying telling the jokes over any sort of humor involved. She swore He told her those just because she hated them. “Want to ride horses with me?” He suddenly asked, patting the mare’s flank. Elvira thought about it for all of a split second, and nodded with a smile. Even if she really should have been getting back...well, it was hard to say no to Father sometimes.

Even if she didn’t fully understand why He liked riding horses so much.

With a simple wave of His hand the rest of the horse herd came galloping up, no longer nervous. Elvira picked the first horse she could see, jumping on the

back of a reddish-brown stallion with a fiery temper that took off running after Father and His mare as they raced across the plains. The stallion was incredibly responsive, as well it should be all things considered, turning and following whatever path she wanted with but a thought.

They didn't ride long, an hour at most, racing across the plains at such *slow speeds*. She could traverse the entirety of the Heaven Realm in the course of a day, maybe less if she really tried. Riding a horse to cover a few miles made her bored out of her skull. Especially when the energy within the land started acting up, flaring here and there and making her remember that there were gods waiting for her back at the palace. Gods who had better have cleaned up their mess.

Children. They were overgrown children, with too much power at their fingertips. Was this what Father had to deal with raising her and her siblings?

"I think I'm going to head back," she announced, leaping off the stallion, flaring her wings to catch her midair. The harsh sun continued to beat down, and she winced at the bright light.

"Ok. Have fun." Father said, wheeling His mare around and flashing her a smile.

“Why is the sun so intense here?” she muttered under her breath, looking up at the Realm Sun. The god within hadn’t been properly formed yet, but she’d been noticing a bit more activity from within, telling her it should happen soon.

“That’s probably my fault.” Father said, suddenly appearing next to her, hands clasped behind His back and a stern expression on His face. “He’s not been very happy with me ever since I created suns in the physical realm. Been throwing a bit of a tantrum, but he’s going to have to just deal with it. It’s no slight against him, the physical realm just needed to be a bit more dynamic.” Elvira nodded, understanding what he was getting at there. It had been necessary – even Reika agreed. They wouldn’t even be immortal suns like the Realm Sun, they would die and be reborn in accordance to the nature of the Physical Realm.

“He’ll come around,” she assured, giving Father a quick hug before shooting off into the sky, back toward her palace. A small thought circled in the back of her mind as she flew, hanging off of what Father said. His intention had not been to give advice, and she hadn’t been seeking it from Him. Call it stubborn pride on her part, but she didn’t want to rely on Him for everything. But that didn’t mean she couldn’t take inspiration from what He said.

Not every decision will be liked. She realized, coming to a soft landing just outside the main palace doors. *If I want to be an ideal leader, the Big Sister to all my little siblings, then I need to be ready to make some hard decisions. Ones that won’t earn me any favors, but will be followed out of respect.* The

interior was mostly empty, most of the gods having left while she was gone, and was thankfully cleaned. The walls had been cleaned of scorch marks, the domed ceiling fixed, and floor re-levelled. In fact, the only thing still broken was a singular pillar, in front of which stood Aerial, the wind goddess. She looked just about in tears, tugging at her long green hair and the sleeves of her new, green robes.

“Sorry we made such a mess. The others already left. They felt bad,” she muttered, voice soft and melodious.

“It is quite alright. But when you come to someone else’s house, don’t trash it just for fun. It is rude,” Elvira said, walking towards her. She looked down, scuffing one foot against the floor, while Elvira looked up at the cracked pillar with a complex expression.

“Sorry the pillar isn’t fixed. I can’t mend stone like the others.” Aerial muttered, wringing her hands. “I don’t know how. Sorry. I just wanted to have fun.” Elvira stopped before the young goddess, sighing mentally but plastering an understanding smile on her face regardless. Whatever anger had plagued her before felt so much lesser now, almost gone even. Was that why Father had taken her on that horse ride? To get her mind on something else?

“There’s nothing wrong with that, you just have to be careful. And not everything needs to be fixed perfectly.” Elvira said, laying a hand on the pillar

and eyeing the cracks critically as her power filled the stone. Some part of her wanted to keep it cracked, as a reminder of today...but that was a silly thought. It did, however, stall her power just long enough to let gold fill the cracked marble, instead of mending the stone.

She paused before she could fix it. That...actually looked pretty good, like a spiderweb of gold crawling up the pillar.

“See?” She said, smiling genuinely at Aeriell’s awed expression. “Even mistakes can make something beautiful.” *Even my mistake.*

“That’s so pretty!” She cried, floating up to get a better look at the gold lines. “Can you show me how to do that?!”

“I’ll do my best. And hey, we might even find something new to do with your wind!” Elvira replied after a moment’s hesitation. Aeriell clapped her hands together happily and started chattering away, sadness forgotten as she all but bounced around the interior of the palace. Elvira watched her with a small, tired smile.

She had no idea how to be an ideal, a leader for other gods to follow or try to be. That was what her Realm was, but it might not be *her*, and there was a difference. For now, though, she could start by being a teacher to the little

ones. Their lessons could start with respect, and learning to control their powers. As if on cue Aerial fired off a burst of wind from her hands, accidentally shattering another window. She winced, and rubbed her face in exasperation.

Definitely starting with control. Life was a fragile thing, after all, and even the gods had to be beholden to some rules.