

The 'big people' transport flew through the air, up towards the palace entrance above. Once there, we grunted as we carefully extricated ourselves from the cramped vehicle, and were then led down the hall towards the throne room. As we traveled, Diane tapped away at the air to send me a message. *Remember, we just need to set things up to let me do the talking, and you get ready to present the food when necessary.*

I gave a brisk nod of agreement, not having the confidence in being able to keep up with the eccentric thought processes of the pixie king. Leave that to Diane, who seemed to have experience from her past games dealing with such people.

It didn't take long for us to arrive in the audience chamber, where multiple large tables were already set out. The king's own throne had been moved from a raised platform to the far end of the tabletop, and he sat on it with an eager expression. "Welcome, great bringers of big foodstuffs! I welcome you in the name of G'Riol! We have waited many days for your return with the gift of promised foods."

I took a deep breath, mentally rehearsing my words before speaking. "Thank you for having us, Great Pixie King Gerfectenalt Riolegese the Third," I said, giving a discreet glance towards Diane, who nodded her head. "As before, I am Drake Advent, King of Fallcry. These are Bella Greenwood and Diane Kagemure of Fallcry, and Ella Leafit, Queen of the Burning Sun Kingdom."

"Oooh, you were a royal, too!?" Gerfectenalt looked at Ella, whose cheeks darkened slightly.

"That is correct. However, I do not have such a culinary talent to provide suitable foods for you. Instead, I hoped to provide you with something else, if you would be so kind as to allow it?"

With a nod from the pixie king, Ella pulled ten small dresses from her inventory. They looked to be perfectly identical, and matched very closely to the grey dresses worn by the pixies. Gerfectenalt flew from his seat to appear before the dresses that had been laid out on the table.

"Although they may look ordinary here, their splendor shows when crossing from the living and spirit worlds," Ella said, causing Gerfectenalt to blink.

It snapped its fingers, runes flickering into existence around the dresses. For the first time, color seemed to emerge in the spirit world. The table and dresses lost their monochromatic look, and the dresses now glittered in various hues that shifted in the light. The pixies let out startled gasps, and even my eyes widened, though not at the sight of the dresses.

Rather, I was shocked by how casually the pixie king had isolated a section of space and shifted it through the barrier of the spirit realm while keeping it visible to us on this side. Even if it was a simple illusion, it should not have been able to reproduce colors in a completely greyscale world.

"I see, I see!" the pixie king explained, snapping its fingers again. The dresses and table returned to their previous grey, though the pixies still looked at them covetously. "We would be happy to trade with E'Leafit for such fine dresses!"

Ella blinked, seeming confused by the name the pixie king had used. "Huh?"

However, the king had already turned towards me, its smile wide. "As for you, have you brought the great cuisine of D'Advent?" As soon as he said that name, there was a small snort from behind me. I had lost focus for a moment thanks to the surprise, so I couldn't be sure if that sound had come from Diane or Bella.

Still, this made me ask a question. "Uhm, sir Great Pixie King Gerfectenalt the Third... is it perhaps tradition among the pixies to name a king based on the name of their kingdom?"

"Hmm? Of course not, that would be silly!" Gerfectenalt refuted. "Why would we ask our kings to change their names whenever they assumed power? No, we just change the name of the kingdom whenever a new king takes over. As I am the Great Pixie King Gerfectenalt Riolegese the Third, that makes this the kingdom of G'Riol. Is that not how it works in the land of D'Advent?"

Another snort, this time I caught it coming from the little halfling behind me. "N-No. Where we are from, we maintain the name of the kingdom after its founding, unless there is some major political upheaval. We also allow our kings or queens to have their own names."

"What?!" the pixie king exclaimed with wide eyes. "But that is so inefficient! How are you supposed to keep track of so many extra names?"

My brow twitched again, and I inwardly questioned how we were the ones with names that were difficult to track. "If I may, how is it that you keep track of the names of other nations if they may change with the succession of a new king?"

"Oh, that's easy!" the pixie explained. "Every kingdom has a great ledger. Whenever a new king takes power, they write their name in the book, and the kingdom's name is updated for everyone else. When the last king, Great Pixie King Herland Umperline the Seventh, was in power, we were the pixie kingdom H'Umper! But I valiantly defeated them and claimed the throne for myself!"

All three of the girls behind me were visibly having difficulty containing their reactions at the former name of the pixie kingdom. I took a deep breath, organizing my thoughts. Even now, the king referred to other pixies with gender neutral pronouns. That led credence to the idea that they were purely agender.

However, the king also revealed that power was transferred not through lineage or election, but by seizing power through force. In other words, the king of each kingdom could be considered

the strongest pixie of the kingdom. That would explain why it had been able to so calmly command the runes before.

That said, my former suspicions were shattered when the king spoke again. "Please, go ahead and provide the foodstuffs. As for you, Queen Ella Leafit, your dresses will be quite popular among the female pixies. They are always looking for pretty new dresses."

My hand froze as it was about to retrieve the first dish from my inventory. Thankfully, Ella voiced my question before I could. "Eh? There are female pixies? I thought you all had the same gender, and that's why you never called anyone 'he' or 'she'."

"Huh? Of course there are genders!" Gerfectenalt retorted incredulously. "How are we to make baby pixies without a mother and a father?!"

"T-Then why do you never use gender pronouns?" Ella questioned hesitantly, causing Gerfectenalt to cough into its hand and look away.

"W-Well, we all look identical, of course. It would be extremely embarrassing if we were to call someone by the wrong pronoun, wouldn't it? Much easier to let love bloom freely, and then find out if you are genetically compatible when the time comes! If you are, congratulations! If not, you still love each other!"

The way the king said that as if it were so obvious made me sigh into my hand. I quickly dished out all the food that Ennolf had prepared. I guess they themselves recognized that they were completely identical, and didn't possess any exceptional means to identify one another. At the same time, because they were identical, there was no such thing as 'gender identity' in their culture, nor any bias based on appearances. I felt like my brain was going to explode the more I learned about this kingdom.

"B-Back to the matter at hand," I forced myself to speak up. "My companion, Diane, would like to speak with you concerning opening further diplomatic ties between our people."

Diane grunted, clearly unprepared after the flurry of revelations, but this was what she had asked me to do. She calmed herself, stepping forward as the pixies happily began to feast. "Great Pixie King Gerfectenalt Riolegese the Third. The people of Fallcry would like to open an embassy for G'Riol within its territory, allowing a number of your people to live there long-term to act as liaisons between our nations."

"Embassy?" The Pixie King mulled over the unfamiliar word. "You want to have some of us live there for communication and trade. That means... more regular foodstuffs deliveries?"

Diane's eye twitched, but she nodded her head. "That would indeed be one of the effects. We would also be able to provide military support, should the kingdom of G'Riol face another incursion from the monster forces, or another 'sneaky place'. In exchange, we would ask for

G'Riol to consider offering similar aid should the forces of Fallcry encounter such troubles. A mutual protection agreement, one might say."

Gerfectenalt, who had already buried itself in a plate of spicy nachos, flew up with wide eyes, hugging a nacho bigger than its body as it nibbled at its edges. "You can provide military aid? Then, could you help us against the higher-ranked kingdoms?"

Diane hesitated, clearing her throat again. "In a mutual protection agreement, we would be helping you with defensive battles. If one of those kingdoms took the initiative to attack you first, then yes, we would have to consider lending you aid. However, if you initiate hostilities without consulting us ahead of time to warn us, we may be unable to provide assistance."

The king hummed thoughtfully. "I see! In that case, I see no reason to oppose this arrangement! And this reminds me, I had one of our merchants draft a list of goods traded within G'Riol! Terrisent Fliont, where are you?"

"Here, Great Pixie King Gerfectenalt Riolegese the Third!" another pixie shouted out, emerging from a hole dug into an ice cream cake, whipped cream on its head. "I'll gather the list posthaste!"

After it said that, the pixie flew off in a streak of light, returning less than a minute later to hand the paper to Diane. Diane let out a small sigh, looking at the paper and reading through it carefully. Thankfully, they prepared this specifically for 'big people', so the text was considerably larger than it was in the Big Book of Runes.

"There are... certainly some interesting items on here." I could see that each item came with its own description, which was especially helpful as some items had vaguely misleading names. "I assume that most of these items would be pixie-sized?" she asked.

Gerfectenalt, however, shook its head. "I spoke with the rune crafters. If there is something that you want from the list, they can work on making big people versions! It will use a lot more materials, though, so we will be asking for many tasty foodstuffs in return!"

It still surprised me that they were willing to handle so much trade with just food, and I suspected that there was a deeper reason to it. However, as I was thinking it over, Diane smiled. "In that case, I would like to ask for ten Evertime Pages, three Weeping Stones, and a Ring Gate to G'Riol."

The king processed the request. "Very well! I can have the Ring Gate prepared right away in exchange for the foodstuffs from this time. As for the others, we will provide them over time as foodstuffs are continually given!"

I looked at Diane, silently asking what the other two items were meant to be. Obviously, the Ring Gate was some kind of item meant for either communication or transportation with a set

destination. However, Everrune Pages and Weeping Stones? I had no idea what those were supposed to be! But Diane shook her head, indicating that she would tell me later.