**Chapter 6: His highness, Lone protector**

"Very well, I shall envelop you in my wings, the solitary guardian of my essence," the vow concludes in a mellower tone as his hands withdraw from my thighs. It's like the evening sky transitioning over the starry night canvas, marking the end of an unsuccessful descent. Tomorrow holds the promise of a fresh attempt at such endeavors.

Darwen remains stationary, seemingly awaiting dismissal, his grumbling coinciding with the commencement of the crickets' songs, nudging me to seize the initiative. "Should you require something, don't hesitate to ask. If thoughts cross your mind, do share them. Staring with those predatory eyes is not a welcome approach."

I state while retrieving a book for perusal. The title ought to be a selection from Father's collection of mortal stories, but it should be as engaging as the genuine article.

Darwen adopts a more relaxed yet assertive tone. "I suppose, as the tales go, you are omnipotent, manipulating mortal lives and the like. How should I articulate this... those grunts perceive you more as a distant observer rather than a tangible presence." The comment needles me slightly.

"Then your perspective?" I inquire, setting the book aside and diverting my complete attention to our conversation.

"As of this moment? A potent entity capable of severing my existence at whim, yet... I doubt you'd harm something in your possession." Darwen ran his fingers through his hair, his voice carrying a mix of casualness and caution. The shift was perceptible; his words now carried a subtle undercurrent of admiration.

"You're accurate in your assessment. Unless provoked, I treat mortals with reason. While you enjoy wealth in life, I struggle to grasp the practical scope of your limitations." My reply highlights the mutual disconnect; I don't watch mortals like Father does nor interact with them as others might. Despite the vast knowledge I possess, I am lamentably unversed in the intricacies of mortal existence.

Darwen shakes his head in disbelief. "Is there anything the archangel of knowledge isn't acquainted with? That's genuinely surprising. Then, I'll supply what mortals seek. In return, I'd like insights into certain magical theories."

I contemplate my terms; there's a risk that I might inadvertently disclose secrets to mortals. I should restrict the exchange to manageable parameters and secure the right to decline to answer certain queries.

"Agreed, let's settle on three questions and responses. Each with the option to decline, though I doubt I'd utter anything that might warrant such restraint." Opting for three questions seems prudent, as a surplus could render our conversation bewildering.

The door seals shut with a magical barrier to prevent eavesdropping, the curtain is drawn, and the room is rendered soundproof. The contents of our discussion remain beyond others' reach unless they force their way through the three formidable magical barriers.

"The first question is yours to pose; choose wisely." I signal the commencement of our knowledge exchange.

He deliberates before posing a somewhat naive question, "Does morality play a role in magic? I recall from my youth that dark magic can be utilized for benevolent purposes."

"There is no inherent moral alignment in magic itself," I affirmed. I couldn't dismiss, however, the vulnerability of human beings to corruption and the aftermath of wielding dark magic.

An underlying caution colored my response, reminding him of the fragility of their existence. "Nevertheless, the human vessel is susceptible to fragility. Employing dark magic for noble ends must be approached with extreme caution to avoid corrupting one's essence."

"In my pursuit of knowledge, I wonder whether mortals truly believe in destinies—an idea that their life paths are set in stone from their earliest days." I posed the question, a topic often present in the numerous texts I've composed. The notion of "destiny" has always struck me as an elaborate concoction, a concept that some attribute to divine interventions or even hallucinations. Neither Father nor Mother has ever elucidated such notions, so I sought validation from a mortal's perspective.

Darwen burst into hearty laughter upon hearing my query. "It's remarkable, Your Holiness. Your innocence is astonishing, and I might just laugh myself into oblivion." His mirth didn't provide the clarity I sought; in fact, it resembled the reaction I'd expect from Gabriel, but I yearned to ascertain the truth from a mortal perspective.

"I can't speak for the elves, but dwarves and humans generally don't place excessive belief in destinies. We're occupied with our daily lives, leaving little room for such contemplations. Only a few souls seem heavily affected by such notions." Darwen's response resonated with my intuition—these convictions often prove to be the fanciful aspirations of dreamers that occasionally become woven into historical narratives.

"Your Holiness, surely you don't entertain such notions?" His laughter ensued again, leading me to halt his frivolity. "Enough of this jesting. Let's proceed to your next question."

"I extend my apologies for the jest. Moving on, my next inquiry pertains to the existence of pure and impure magic. I'm particularly intrigued by the combination and summoning of magical elements." Darwen's query prompted contemplation. I pondered the imposition of labels, these seemingly arbitrary distinctions imposed by mortals due to the constraints of their physical forms. I hope such labelling won't hinder the pursuit of truth itself.

"The classification of magic into pure or impure lacks merit. Much like the classification of light and dark magic by moral alignment, these distinctions are often employed to discourage experimentation that could lead to irreversible harm to one's essence." I offered an honest response, prompting Darwen to grapple with newfound knowledge that carried with it a twinge of regret. His expressions seemed to struggle between gratitude and remorse.

The conversation progressed, steering towards the essence of human aspirations in the absence of destinies. "If destinies hold no sway, then what do humans seek to achieve in their lives?" I inquired, my doubt prevalent.

"To pursue what they deem valuable and worthy in their lives. The backdrop of historical context sometimes influences their aspirations." Darwen's sigh of relief marked a transition to a safer topic. Evidently, this inquiry struck a chord of skepticism within him.

A knock echoed from beyond the door—an unlikely circumstance for a mere servant or knight to summon Darwen. The visitor behind the door bore an air of significance, as I discreetly stepped aside to observe this nocturnal caller.

"I have come to inquire after the Archangel of Wisdom, though it appears my presence wasn't anticipated." The figures standing at the threshold bore the marks of age, their magical aura tinged with remnants of vigor despite their graying and silvering hair. Their attire was unassuming, a stark contrast to the power they emanated. I deduced them to be high-ranking mages, seeking to engage in some form of intrigue.

"Fear not, Marvo—or rather, Your Majesty. Do take a seat. I had nearly forgotten a prior engagement." Darwen's words stumbled, caught between his fluster and the majesty of the person seeking my company. I positioned myself discreetly behind the doorframe to observe the unfolding interaction.

"Stay, Darwen. Your presence is indeed welcomed. The crux of the matter rests upon whether I'm granted an audience." The human king's humility was conveyed in a respectful bow, seeking approval before venturing further.

"I grant you entrance, O King of Humans. Pray be seated, for our game is nearing its conclusion, and I shall attend to your greetings once it concludes." My response extended Darwen's stay, much to my decision. I observed as the visitor settled upon my presence, studying his demeanor.

"What game were you playing with His Holiness, Darwen?" The human king's query was poised with curiosity.

"An exchange of three questions and answers, Your Majesty. We are presently engaged in the final round. Your intrigue is palpable," Darwen replied, explaining the nature of our discourse.

"May I beseech you, Darwen, for those questions? In return, I offer you a coveted reward: three casks of wine." The king's proposal was ambitious, extending a trade without my consent. His reputation as a wise ruler left little room for such audacity.

"Even without the allure of rewards, I shall relinquish my questions to Your Majesty. I've gleaned the answers I sought." Darwen's response retained a grasp on the reward. Greed's tendrils seemed to reach even the mortal realm, I mused silently.

"Then proceed with care, O King of Humans, and we shall embark on a formal exchange befitting the ruler I have been remiss in welcoming during my descent," I declared, signaling the continuation of our game.

"Already facing threats, Archangel of Wisdom? Your benevolent image seems to be reaching a saturation point lately. Well, I shall pose my single question... Is my unwavering faith in your cause justified?" The king of humans inquired, displaying a mix of surprise and resolve in his question.

"Your Majesty!" Darwen whispered, clearly taken aback. The question held a weight that resonated beyond the scope of a simple query. The reaction was unsurprising, given the potential consequences. Nonetheless, I remained intrigued, curious to hear the rest of his reasoning.

"I abstain from disclosing my faith in the thirteen archangels or whether your response will alter our kingdom's stance. I merely seek clarity on the righteousness of your cause," the king clarified, presenting his question with a depth of nuance.

"I acknowledge certain entities that regard even the most insignificant mortals as nothing more than ants. Your query touches on whether my wisdom might be compromised by such perspectives," I interpreted, recognizing his concern. The audacity of a human to hold such independent thought while cautiously skirting blasphemy intrigued me. Finding a kindred perspective, I opted to answer candidly.

"Your concern aligns with some of our contemplations about the value and worth of mortal lives. I assure you, my pursuit of knowledge doesn't undermine the fundamental values of nature," I responded, delving into my desire to immerse myself in human lives rather than observing and guiding from a distance.

"What specific values do you allude to?" The king's inquiry bore a cheeky tone, inviting further dialogue.

"For the late hour, I shall reserve my right to decline," I invoked my right, finding it inopportune to delve into the intricacies of human mortality during the late night hours.

"Your response satisfies my query. May this exchange remain equitable," the king concluded his turn, an air of satisfaction palpable in his demeanor.

"Then, King of Humans, it is my turn. Do you perceive your aspirations encompassing Wealth, Fame, Power, or Immortality? In light of my acquired knowledge from Darwen, which indicates mortals' detachment from destinies, I'm keen to learn of your human desires," I posed my question, eager to uncover the depths of his yearnings.

"To safeguard this kingdom from all harm, through any means necessary," he declared resolutely. Yet, the open-ended phrase 'any means necessary' invited interpretation. Could this commitment extend to endangering my existence as well?

"To the extent of even taking the life of an idle observer that posed a threat?" I inquired further, seeking to probe the extent of his resolve.

"Here, too, I exercise my right to decline this question," the king responded with a chuckle, employing the tactical maneuver with cheeky finesse.

"That isn't quite how the game works!" Darwen interjected, drawing attention to our playful antics. His intervention relieved the mounting tension.

"The hour grows late. Allow me to offer my greetings and then leave Your Holiness to a well-deserved restful sleep," the king proposed, his words laced with humility.

"I, Marvos Oswald Agnus, the 34th ruler of the human kingdom, express my loyalty to the Archangel of Wisdom," with these words, Marvos concluded his sought-after meeting, escorting Darwen along as they departed.

The night's tranquility returned, enveloping me as I drifted into dreams, reflections of the events unfolding before me. In the realm of dreams, these confessions metamorphosed into intriguing visions, etching themselves into the tapestry of my thoughts.

**The end**

**One ruler, a tale whispered, never sold,**

**Silver-tongued, secrets within them, enfold.**

**Deception spun, veils of intrigue and lore,**

**Master of illusions, truths to explore.**

**The other, ruler with honor's embrace,**

**Noble grace and wisdom, painted on their face.**

**Moves deliberate, untarnished, and just,**

**Exposing deceit, shattering lies to dust.**