

## Side Story – First Child of Two Worlds

Tarsh Yuron sat on a bench in one of his many stables, his four hands were all on a sleeping monster, a war-charger breed of Rock Mountain Boar. It was a breed that he had cultivated and created by himself some fifty years ago, and it was one of his favorites. He had been tasked to make a breed of boar for mounted combat by a mid-sized sect, it had taken him a couple of years to get the breed down right and fulfill all of their requests. He still remembered how proud he was when he had finally gotten it just right. It seemed fitting somehow that it was now that he had finally accomplished his long sought-after goal. As his perk finished its work and made changes to the embryo in the animal in front of him, a notification appeared in the corner of his eyes.

He pulled it up and immediately read through it.

<b>Essence Breeder Quest Completed!</b>
Create nine new breeds with at least 80% differences from the original strain: 9/9
Crossbreed nine breeds with conflicting aspects: 9/9
Discover nine unique and previously unknown monster types: 9/9
Discover nine new and previously unknown traits in breeds you created: 9/9
Gain any <b>Grandmaster Breeder</b> title from any faction: 1/1

He had finally completed his Class Quest for his level 420 evolution. It had been so long; he had almost forgotten about it. He had attained requirements for a few classes over the years, but always he would pass them over, waiting and striving to reach the one that he had asked the Dealmaker for. The Class that would put him above every other breeder in the world.

He immediately stood and walked out of the stables and headed for the small hut where he usually slept. He didn't need much, and most of his land was covered with stables and pastures where he kept his animals. He entered and reached for a chair, then as soon as he sat down, he started putting

Essence into his new Class. He had accumulated a lot of it over the years. Tarsh was one of the most well-regarded breeders in this part of the core, and his position on the border of Sect and Guild territories worked to make him be in demand by both sides. He had wealth enough to keep some for his advancement, although most of it he invested back into his stock. Feeding his animals, hiring monster hunters to capture rare specimens for him, hiring workers to help him with the animals, it all added up to an insane sum.

Still, he quickly rose in his levels, some of his perks upgraded and he started to get new perks. He took his time with each, but the first hadn't been anything special, and he very nearly started to regret his decision to try and be a trailblazer. But then he reached a perk that nearly took his breath away.

Essence Fertilization (Class Perk)	Once per month you may take the Essence of one being and implant it into another. The implanted being must be a being that possesses eggs that can be fertilized. The fertilized egg will take on the basic template of the <i>mother</i> being, some traits from the Essence of the <i>father</i> being will be transferred to the basic template. This type of fertilization will work across species.
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Tarsh blinked in disbelief. This perk would allow him to... to mix different species, to create new types of monsters that would be completely unique. With this, he could become not just the best breeder in this part of the world, but everywhere! This was a gain of a lifetime, something that changed everything.

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Three years, that was how long it had taken Tarsh to truly understand and get full control of his perk. It wasn't as simple as its description made it sound like. He had managed to create three stable species by combining two completely different types of monsters. It was... an achievement that would shake the Infinite Realm. Or rather, it would have shaken it.

Now, Tarsh stopped his hurried escape through the mountain pass and looked back at the valley that had been his home. In the dimming light of the sun a karura with four wings of blue and black feathers that shifted constantly flew in the sky. The Storm Caller, with a group of her warriors came down from the sky, red lightning smashed into the army below and wind threw them aside like they weighed less than twigs.

His home had been consumed in the fighting, his life's work destroyed, and there was nothing that he could do about it. A war that was not of his doing, that had nothing to do with him at all. And yet somehow, the two sides had converged here, in his valley, in the territory of his faction. He didn't even know the reason why they were fighting.

Lightning blazed and the earth heaved, Tarsh turned around and walked away, not able to look at the fire consuming his home.

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He expected it, but it still hit him hard. A year since his home had been destroyed, a year of attempting to get back on his feet, and he had nothing. None of his colleagues had been willing to help him, not even to give him a loan of Essence or hire him to work for them. He was higher level than most of them, better than them, none wanted to risk him growing enough that he could take from them what was theirs. Despite his assurances that he would not, not even when he offered to make contracts with them. Not even his enemies had agreed. He was alone and on the streets.

All the Essence that he possessed had been invested in his work, in his monsters, in the people, and in himself. He had nothing to help him rebuild.

There was only one thing that he could do now, one thing that might earn him enough Essence, and he hated even the thought of it. But he knew that he had no choice now.

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Tarsh walked into the Guild House of the Seekers of Knowledge, walking past the grand entrance filled with robes figures walking about. At the end of the room, he found one of the attendants waiting and dealing with patrons that entered the Guild House. There, Tarsh waited in line until it was his turn, and then he stated his reason for coming. Unsurprisingly he was quickly ushered into a private room and left with one Seeker sitting across from him.

The man or woman across the table from him wore the standard Seeker garb, a black cloak with a mask over their face.

“Tarsh Yuron,” a clearly female voice said. “You’ve come to share knowledge with us?”

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. “Yes, for a price,” he answered.

The Seeker nodded her head. “Of course, the Seekers of Knowledge understand that not all knowledge is free. But the payment will depend on what you have to offer.”

Tarsh looked at the blank face-mask, knowing that this was his last chance to turn away and keep his secrets. But... he didn’t have any other option. Not if he wanted to get back to his old life.

“I offer the knowledge of my Class, of the requirements for it and all the evolutions before it. I offer the knowledge of my perks and all the prerequisites for them. I offer the work of my entire life.”

The Seeker didn’t say anything for a long while, shocked into silence.

“Well,” she said after a while. “That is worth much.”

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Tarsh looked over the modest stable, at least modest in comparison to what he used to have, but it was a start. He had sold the information about his Class for a fortune, enough that he had been able to restart his life. It pained him in a way, he had given information that will inevitably spread, the Seekers bought and sold all kinds of information and knowledge. In time, there would be others with his exact build, some that will improve on things that he had done even. But that was a concern for the future, for now, he needed only to build up his new menagerie and restart his business.

He walked out of the stable and headed toward the small house that he now lived in. He didn't take more than three steps outside of the stable before he felt pain in the back of his head, and then—darkness.

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Tarsh woke up slowly, his mind taking a few moments to catch up with his surroundings. He was lying in a lavish bed, in a room that he didn't recognize that was just as lavish as the bed. In the room were three people, his eyes hadn't yet adjusted properly to the torch light so he couldn't make out any more than their outlines.

His heart started to pound, as he looked around searching for a way out. The only exit that he could see was behind the three people.

“Ah, Grandmaster Yuron, good morning,” a voice said, using the title that Tarsh had earned as part of a faction that no longer existed.

“What is this? Where am I?” Tarsh said as he pushed himself to a sitting position.

“Apologies for the manner in which we brought you here, but the matter is... delicate,” the same voice sad. Then one of the three shapes walked forward.

By now Tarsh's eyes had adjusted well enough that he could see the three. The man on the left of Tarsh was a demasi wearing armor and had his hand on the pomel of the sword at his hip. He looked like a warrior, and he started at Tarsh without blinking. In the center was the man that had been walking closer to the bed. He was a human, tall and wide, clearly muscular. His hair was black and shoulder length, and he had a full beard. His clothes were fine, but functional. Tarsh swallowed as he recognized the man.

"Do you know who I am?" the man asked.

Tarsh nodded his head. "Of course, Lord Darkhoof."

Venges Darkhoof kept Tarsh's gaze for a long minute. Tarsh tried to remember everything that he knew about the Axe Lord, the High Ranker that led the Adventurers Guild. He was born a long time ago, just years after the first Iteration arrived. His parents died when he was but a babe, and he was adopted by a clan of minotaurs, raised in their ways. He fought in the early years when so many of the powerful died to unknown monsters. Years after the third Iteration arrived, he started a group that eventually became the Adventurers Guild. He was one of the most influential and powerful people in the world.

"I've brought you here because I have needs of your services, Grandmaster Yuron."

Tarsh tried to calm himself. True, he had been kidnapped, but perhaps there was still some way that he could get out of this alive.

"Pardon Lord, but there were better ways to get my services," Tarsh said, if he was needed at least he could voice his displeasure.

Darkhoof grimaced and nodded. "I apologize, but I couldn't risk anyone realizing what we wanted. Rest assured, you will be compensated greatly for your time and work, and in the end you will leave here with greater wealth than anything you had ever had."

Tarsh blinked at that, he didn't know what he could do for someone like a High Ranker, there were hundreds if not thousands of other breeders that would've thrown themselves at his feet just for a chance at pleasing him. Tarsh was good, one of the best, but there were others just as good.

"Well, I am sure that we can come to an agreement. I have started a new stable, my stock is low but I—"

“No,” Darkhoof shook his head. “You are not here because of your monsters.”

Tarsh blinked, confused.

Darkhoof glanced behind himself at the last person in the room, and she walked over, reaching down to take the High Ranker’s hand in her own. They stood before him, holding hands and Tarsh recognized her too. She was the man’s partner, had been for hundreds of years. He remembered hearing that they had... issues in the beginning, because of their relationship. They started being together when relationships between races hadn’t been looked upon favorably. The woman was damasi, tall and with dark red tinted skin. Her horns curled to the side then back behind her head and her orange eyes looked at him. She wasn’t a High Ranker as her partner was, but she too was known as a great adventurer—Ninha Rehdan. For all intents and purposes, she was perhaps just as powerful.

“I apologize Lord, but I don’t understand?” Tarsh looked at them.

“We’ve searched for something for a long time, and then you sold information to the Seekers,” Darkhoof said.

Tarsh frowned. This was about his Class? He didn’t understand and before he could ask for him to elaborate, he spoke again.

“You have a perk that we are interested in, **Essence Fertilization.**”

Tarsh kept his confused eyes on them, looking from one of them to the other. Then finally his eyes fell on their hands. They were holding each other tightly, their hands almost shaking. He realized that they were... nervous? Frightened maybe, or perhaps excited. It took longer than it should’ve for him to realize what they meant.

“Tha—that, it doesn’t work like—that...” He finished weakly, but he had already pulled his perk up, reading it again. The description clearly stated being, not monster, he pulled more perks up. Those that had been upgraded on his level up. The wording had changed to being for a couple of them. He had never really thought about what that meant. His world had been monsters, he never imagined.

“I... I don’t know if it can work that way,” Tarsh whispered.

“We are willing to try,” Ninha Rehdan said in a soft voice that clearly translated longing unlike anything that Tarsh had ever heard before.

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Tarsh sat on a chair in a small bedroom, Ninha Rehdan sat on a modified chair across from him completely naked and with her legs spread open. Venges Darkhoof loomed on a chair next to her, naked as well, glaring at everything. He didn't know if clothes would interfere, he had never done this on someone who was not a monster, but the clothes themselves were made out of Essence too, and he didn't know if the proximity would somehow contaminate the sample that he could take. The situation was uncomfortable for all of them, but he was doing this in the same way that he had done it with his monsters. He couldn't make any mistakes. Usually, he would take the Essence from near the reproductive organ of the monster he wanted to transfer traits from. He didn't know if the location made any difference, but now was not the time for him to change or try new things out.

He took a deep breath then put one of his four hands on Ninha's stomach, he focused his mind and started the process of casting his perks: **Inside Sight, Greater Enhanced Fertility, Calm System, Reproductive Trance.**

Once he was done, he glanced at the High Ranker. Tarsh did not look forward to this part, but there was nothing to it. Still, the situation was awkward and embarrassing for all of them. Tarsh was not a healer, but he had tried to make everything seem as professional as he could, but there was a difference between monsters and people.

He reached over with one of his other hands and focused, then he used his perk—**Essence Fertilization** and pulled. He had talked with the two of them prior to this moment, and they had their input into what traits they wanted from the father. They settled on the smaller traits, human eyes and muscle structure. Enough that anyone who looked on the child would be able to tell that they were not fully demasi. Tarsh didn't know what was going to happen, but based on his own experiments with the monsters, the results were not always what one expected. White and seed-like looking stream of



Essence left the High Ranker through his skin. It was slightly glowing, and it formed into a ball in Tarsh's palm. With his third and fourth arm, Tarsh opened his insertion tool and placed the Essence inside.

Then he turned back to Ninha, raised his syringe and glanced at her face.

"Ready?" He asked.

She nodded her head. "Do it."

Tarsh swallowed and then got to work, he placed one hand on the syringe and used his perks: **Total Sterilization, Numbing Agent, Flexible Material**. After that, he inserted it. He did not have the best knowledge of demasi anatomy, but he had familiarized himself in the last couple of weeks. Despite his fears, he didn't have any issues completing this part of the process. Once done, he placed a hand over her stomach again and focused.

### **Guiding Hand, Instant Fertilization.**

The two perks activated, and he felt through the next part, being able to see through her skin with his **Inside Sight**. He guided the Essence to its target and then **Instant Fertilization** finished.

He looked at the egg, his other perks pinging in his mind and then finally it took hold. He sighed and relaxed.

"What happened?" Venges asked.

Tarsh glanced at him and his mandibles clicked in excitement. "It worked."

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Tarsh had continued to monitor Ninha during her pregnancy, which lasted for eight months. They hadn't dared to try and use any potions or his other perks that accelerated the process. Instead, it had been a long eight months of daily scans and uncertainty. From what Tarsh could see, the pregnancy proceeded without any issues, his perk had done its job well.

Finally, when the time for birth came, Tarsh was there to help the woman through it. After only a few hours of an intense birth, the child was born. There, nestled in Tarsh's hands was a pale skinned baby, two tiny protrusions marked the start of horns on top of his head. The child's skin was split into two shades. His limbs were deep red in color, the same as the mother, while the rest was the same shade as his human father, not something that they had planned for, but he had warned them that his perk could have unforeseen effects. The child opened his eyes and Tarsh looked into very clearly human eyes that were orange, not a natural human color. Tarsh realized that what he held in his hands was the future of the Infinite Realm. A child of two different worlds, a child that changed everything.