

Hunter 222

Chapter 222: World Congress: On The Flip Of A Coin

The second vote quickly approached its end, and by now, there was quite a bit of nervousness going around. The last hour had contained plenty of closed-door deals and under-the-table agreements on what to vote for.

Miranda told Jake that she and Lillian had gone to reaffirm the vote for herbs with those who promised it before. She even went as far as making binding system agreements with them, not allowing them just to make empty promises.

With the many votes of Haven and at least a few from some of the other top 10 ones, Herbs was pretty much secured as one of the chosen options. Honestly, no one was sure what the other options would be, but Wood and Stone had apparently become less popular over the last hour.

This was due to the ability to sell to other cities using the store, and the different factions had begun just making deals with those who had plenty of a particular resource. Of course, there was the issue that you couldn't sell to designated buyers based on the description of the store, but it would at least mean some wood or Stone was up for sale.

Haven would likely sell some wood, too, logging from around the outskirts of the forest towards the Fort. They didn't want to ruin the city of Haven itself, but no one really cared about the outskirts closer to the Fort. All it would do was make less forest between the Fort and Haven... and there was plenty of forest to take from. More than they could possibly log for many years.

There were some worries, though. Such as... what did the system consider an item? Or a material? Many types of wood apparently weren't identifiable without some mild processing or until transformed into an item, just like some herbs and fruits didn't recognize as an item before they matured. Could you just throw a pile of trees into the store? How would the system communicate what you were selling?

He was also aware that he didn't have full information on this. Identify only worked on items you could actually Identify... like how he couldn't Identify herbs back before becoming an alchemist. Miranda also couldn't see the properties of herbs before she got some general appraising skill for magical catalysts from her class that now allowed her to Identify some herbs. On a side note, everyone could apparently Identify stuff like equipment or consumables, but the details may vary. Like how Jake can see how much a potion will restore and others can't, and how a blacksmith can see details if Identifying a weapon or armor.

The only ones that could kind of Identify everything were merchants. According to Miranda, rather than an Identify skill, they often got it upgraded or get a new similar skill called Appraisal or something like that. That made sense to Jake... as a merchant kind of has to know what the hell he is handling.

Actually, would merchants be able to do something special with the system store? Maybe some additional options? An easier way to sell items?

All of these were questions Jake was glad he didn't have to really think about, outside of interesting consideration to what an item is. He could just ask Miranda or someone else about it after the fact.

Jake had also considered if he should try and flex some potions and promise to put some up for sale if everyone voted for Herbs... but he didn't really want to put himself out there like that. He would also seriously need to commission some more bottles soon.

He had Miranda give him back quite a few, and she had even scrounged up some additional ones from a merchant, but Jake still needed a lot. He had this bad habit of sometimes throwing a poison bottle or his potion bottles breaking after drinking them.

Hmm, will potion bottles be a part of Gems and Crystals or maybe Stone? Jake considered. Glass is made from sand, and sand is technically small annoying underwear-invading stones. Which begged another question... were they even made of glass? He didn't actually know. Maybe it was just some special kind of crystal?

As these thoughts passed through his head, Neil entered the barrier, and Jake also noticed that the vote for the system store would begin in around 5 minutes.

Jake nodded at Neil and asked. "Any progress on getting some teleportation network up and running?"

Neil looked a bit surprised that the unmasked Jake asked, but just smiled and answered. "A bit, but it isn't easy. We need to properly link things up, which will require us to travel to other cities and set them up as it is now. We are hoping to find a way to sync them up without having to travel.."

"How would that work?" Jake asked, genuinely curious. He loved figuring out how all the magic stuff worked.

"Hm, it is a bit like finding a radio frequency that we can tap into - one not currently used. You can say that the usual space we occupy is the stable wavelength, and any deviations to it result in spatial distortion. Space magic, as I understand it, is basically just fiddling with the frequency in a localized area," Neil began, as he gladly continued, clearly happy to see someone interested.

"So, what we are trying to do is to create matching spatial radios of sorts, all running on the exact same wavelength to make the entire journey between the two stable. We need it to be a frequency that is also properly compressed and warps the space between the two locations. Like that old movie trope where the science guy folds a paper in half and pokes a pencil through. We need to make sure the frequency properly bends the paper and then for the teleportation to poke the whole with whatever we transport on the edge of the pencil."

“Wait, won’t you need the spatial radios as you call them to be able to differ in frequency dependant on where you want to go? And what if that space is distorted by other means during travel?” Jake asked.

Neil just looked at him for a few moments. The surprise on his face from Jake actually having listened palpable.

“It is indeed a challenge. Outside interference isn’t really that big of a deal as we can stabilize it, so unless another expert messes with it or someone booby traps the teleportation circle, the teleportation itself should be safe and 100% reliable. You are also right that the teleportation circles will need to link up to each other. Luckily, we think we have found a solution to that,” Neil said quite confidently.

“Do tell.”

“We will use the system store to sell items with spatial signatures imprinted on them as well as confidential codes only known and understandable by us space mages. It will take a while, but with it, we should be able to establish a good network of participating cities. This does require the teleportations circles to be absolutely stable, and they cannot be moved around after being established and linked. Luckily planets heavily stabilize the frequency of space, but we would still need regular maintenance for the circles to not have them de-sync due to the planet moving and stuff like that.”

“Well, sounds like you have quite the task ahead of you,” Jake chuckled. “How will you power the circles?”

“Yeah... that is another issue. The circles will require A LOT of spatial mana to work. More dependent on the distance. It will also get more expensive the stronger the person we send. By the way, these

teleportation circles aren't our inventions at all, but common knowledge in the multiverse, confirmed by how we pretty much all have the same understanding based on the study resources we had access to. I still have quite a few books stored in the Orb," Neil said, getting a bit sidetracked. Jake already knew these teleportations weren't their invention as so many damn books he read talked about them as being regular business across the multiverse.

"Didn't answer my question. How will you power it?" Jake asked again

"Right. To begin with, it will 100% require one of us space mages present to power it, and even then, it will require consumables. If Gems and Crystals got voted, there might be useable energy sources there, but it is honestly a big maybe as items with space affinity are rare. No, it makes more sense for us to make such that regular mana can be transformed into space mana to power the circle, but that will take a while to get up and running. Even then, it will result in it needing even more maintenance as these catalysts to transform mana will wear out quickly. Again, this is how it is often done throughout the multiverse in the early stages of these networks. There are better ways, but they will take even longer and even more power to get up and running. Of course, if we suddenly had a B-grade space mage, he could just toss up super-advanced circles running on atmospheric mana and tapping into high-level concepts to power it, but I don't see that happening any time soon."

"Sounds like you have a major task ahead of you," a female voice said.

Miranda and Lillian entered the barrier, making Neil look a bit embarrassed. He was really getting into it, and Jake found it quite interesting. Sadly, the time to vote was approaching. But more importantly...

"Hey, that's what I said," Jake said, cracking a smile.

"Great minds think alike," Miranda smiled as she turned a bit more serious. "I have done what I can, and I believe Herbs should be locked down, but it would still be risky for us not to pour our votes into it.

Based on the talks, I also strongly believe that Ore and Metal will be voted in. As for the last option... it is honestly up in the air.”

“I reckon it will still be Stone or Wood, though I did hear some talk of Foodstuff in some of the rapidly expanding settlements. Food has a lot of value in regenerating resources faster. People still have to eat a bit... I can’t talk about D-grade, but even at E-grade, we can’t go entirely without food,” Lillian pitched in.

Jake had to admit.. he had barely thought of food as one of the things that could possibly get voted. There was so much to find, and people needed far less. Yet people still needed a little... Jake had just never noticed it.

Did he really get his fill from herbs and stuff? Actually, about the time he stopped eating as many herbs, Miranda began bringing him food. Was he really just a spoiled brat who got all the food handed to him on a platter – literally?

I guess I shouldn’t judge others like that, and I am sure chefs and cooks can make some awesome stuff; if not, they wouldn’t get their own entire profession. The food Miranda brings is also godly... if Foodstuff was voted, maybe they could make even better things and level faster. Haven needs a D-grade chef sooner rather than later.

Anyway, the timer slowly ticked down, and by now, everyone had returned to their own platforms. Nearly all of them were fully obscured as the factions went through a last-second discussion on what to vote for.

Voting has begun!

Please distribute your votes.

Votes remaining: 10/10

Time to vote: 4:59

Options for store offerings:

1.Herbs

2.Or

Jake stopped reading there and poured all ten votes into Herbs. Miranda, Lillian, and Neil did the same, as they just waited and made some small talk to pass the time. He felt a bit nervous about Herbs possibly not being voted as it was really the only option he cared about. Should I have done more to convince people? No... put trust in Miranda. You would just have made things worse.

The vote for the Limited System Store has concluded!

Voting breakdown (ordered based on the number of votes received):

1.Ores & Metals

You got to be fucking kidding me. I swear to fucking Villy I will-

2.Herbs

Okay, all good. Phew.

3.Stone

So Stone won out, eh?

3.Fruit, Grain & other Foodstuffs

Wait, what? Two threes?

4.Wood

5.Mixed Monster Leather, Hides & Bones

6.Cloth, Thread, and other Textiles.

7.Gems & Crystals

8.Chemicals

9.Mixed Monster Body Parts, Meat & Innards

Does two threes mean there is a tie? Wait, doesn't that mean-

The vote has resulted in a tie. The highest-ranking noble shall function as the tiebreaker. The highest-ranking noble present is the Earl [?] from Haven and will have 10 minutes to decide.

This isn't all good anymore, not at all.

As the high-ranking noble, it is your privilege and responsibility to take charge during a political impasse. You must exercise your power and choose either Fruit, Grain & other Foodstuff, or Stone as the third resource to enter the Limited System Store.

Time to choose: 9:57

WARNING: If you fail to select, the decision will default to the second-highest ranking noble present, chosen based on who obtained the Viscount Title first.

Well, fuck me.

Jake was the only one that could read the last few system messages after it said the decision was now up to him... and he felt it. Every single fucking pair of eyes turned his way, and the damn barrier was always made see-through just as a vote ended, making everyone look straight at him.

He wanted to make it obscure him, but he grit his teeth as he prepared himself for what was coming.

“Excuse me-“

“Sir, I believe-“

“For the sake of-“

“I implore you to-“

A dozen voices spoke up, all directed towards Jake to try and make him choose their preferred option. Jake felt like it was all a bit overwhelming but kept his cool. He focused on the mask on his face and that

he was the one in charge here... but more importantly, he chose to believe in the person he had appointed City Lord.

Jake raised his hand to silence everyone. Saya – the city of the Sword Saint – the undead, Sanctdomo, the Court, and many of the other major factions hadn't said anything; it was mainly all the smaller factions. Soon, everyone quieted down as Jake spoke.

"Let's do this fairly."

With a motion, a small item appeared in his hand - a coin. He noticed a few people's eyes go wide. His brother made a big grin on his platform, one mirrored by Jacob, Casper, Bertram, and even the Sword Saint, who clearly found his decision amusing.

Jake placed the coin in his hand, and with a flick, he tossed it into the air. It spun at incredible speed before it landed on top of his hand and was instantly covered by his other hand.

He looked out into the hall and spotted a random City Lord from one of the lower-ranking cities. "You there. If you're right, Stone, if you're wrong, Foodstuff. Choose, Heads or tails?"

The poor City Lord took a few moments to notice he was talking to her, and all the attention switched her way. She was clearly surprised to be put on the spot but managed to collect herself as she asked.

"How do we know you aren't doing some trick?" she asked, clearly not wanting to choose.

“You don’t, and I don’t care what you think. If I wanted, I could just pick a random one myself. So... heads or tails?”

She stood there hesitating before Jake just shook his head and looked to her neighbor, another low-ranking noble. “You then. Heads or tails?”

The man looked a bit more assured as he shrugged, gladly playing along. Perhaps not caring that much himself. “Heads, I guess.”

Jake smiled as he lifted his hand, and the coin was revealed: Tails.

“Foodstuff it is.”

He didn’t even give the objections time to come as he chose it, and the system notification went out to everyone.

Voting for the Limited System Store has concluded.

The store will include an assortment of Ores & Metals, Herbs, and Fruit, Grain & other Foodstuffs. The store will be available upon the conclusion of the World Congress.

Jake heard a few yells of people claiming it was unfair and other silly objections, but he didn’t care. Nothing was fairer than a coinflip. Sure, it would be cheating if he picked himself with his intuition,

which is why he made someone else pick. Though the complaints still annoyed him. Miranda had even given him an approving smile, so it couldn't be that bad.

Luckily, the next system message quickly came to make people shut up.

The third and final vote of the World Congress will pertain to the upcoming System Event to help the enlightened races of Earth.