

Hunter 361

Chapter 361 - The Auction (Read: Alchemy) Begins!

System Announcement:

The initial phase of the Auction has concluded. A brief intermission of fifteen minutes will be held before the true Auction begins, starting with all rare rarity items. The central hall will now unlock, and anyone present during an ongoing auction will be able to participate and bid through a provided interface.

Based on performance, certain individuals will have private booths available.

Time remaining: 14:59

As Jake, Miranda, Sultan, and Sylphie left the side room, the message appeared. They were soon joined by the others from Haven, who had also split up to enter other rooms, as they all walked straight across the hallway and into the central chamber.

Most of them didn't have any items to put up for sale, as Jake came to learn. Not because they didn't have anything, but because during the week Jake had spent traveling and with family, Sultan had meticulously sought out every D-grade in Haven he considered worth approaching to act as a middle-man.

Entering the central chamber, Jake quickly surveyed it. It was massive as expected, with a small podium in the middle. Around it was countless chairs at increasingly elevated levels, making it look more like a congressional hall.

Even higher up than any of the normal seating were the aforementioned booths, with Jake seeing a total of seventeen of them. They were all fairly large and looked like the entire front of them was a glass panel to give a full view of the whole hall. The weird thing was that Jake saw no way to get into them. No doors or openings of any kind.

Jake wondered which one was his and how to get in as another message appeared before him:

Congratulations, you have earned a private booth due to your performance in the Treasure Hunt. Simply will for yourself to enter it any time you are within the central chamber, and you will be teleported. You may also invite others to join you within the private booth and choose to kick them out if you so choose.

Well, that seems easy enough, Jake thought. But, before he even went, Sylphie disappeared from atop his head, with Jake becoming completely unable to feel her presence anywhere. Jake swiftly willed himself to go to the booth and appeared within it, having a small hawk land on his head less than a second later.

The booth was incredibly spacious and far larger inside than outside, no doubt due to spatial expansion. There were a few hundred chairs and dozens of comfortable sofas within, with the huge window at the front allowing one to get a panoramic view of the central chamber. If Jake had to guess, then the booth could probably hold a few thousand people without any issues. Not that Jake wanted that many.

“Now, who should we invite,” Jake muttered as he naturally sent one to Miranda and Sultan both, considering one was Miranda and the other was his acting merchant.

Within a second, they both appeared, and Jake thought a bit more as he also invited Neil with his entire party, as well as Arnold. All of them accepted near-instantly, with Neil and his party offering thanks and

Arnold just giving him a nod as he found a chair to sit in off to the side, pulling out a small weird orb he began tinkering with.

Jake went to the window and saw people mull into the hall. He saw Casper enter and instantly disappear as he no-doubt also went to a booth. The same was true for others, including Eron, and even people from the Holy Church, despite their not-so-good end to the Treasure Hunt.

His brother also had his own booth, with even a few independents he saw disappear as they had apparently done well enough to earn themselves a booth. Carmen, with the people from Valhal, also naturally had one.

Then he spotted a few people making way as the crowd split to reveal two figures. Reika walked along with an old man using a cane as he took small steps. Jake narrowed his eyes as he saw the backlash of the Transcendent skill so clearly. The Saint looked and felt weak, but at the same time, his gaze was as sharp if not sharper than ever before, and even as he walked with a cane, he gave off an aura making no one dare try to start something.

He had barely entered the hall as he also disappeared to his own private booth along with Reika and a slew of other people he assumed were from his clan. Yet before he disappeared, Jake spotted the small mark on the side of his head just above his left ear - a small scar left by Jake's arrow during the final moments.

Jake brought his hand up to the scar still on his own neck too. Scars after the system were not as before. They didn't need to exist but could easily heal... but there were instances where they would remain anyway. If the one with the scar willed for them to stay, evolution and healing could not and would not remove them, but there were also circumstances where a scar held certain meaning or implications. In Jake's case, it was a reminder, and he had a feeling it was for the old man too. Also, curses could cause them, but this was not one such case.

As he stood there, he noticed two people walk in he instantly recognized.

It was a large man in a robe walking with a familiar staff together with a lithe woman. It was the elemental mage Roman and the dual-wielding rogue from the Rubik's Cube Vault – or Roman and Felicia if one was more a fan of names.

Jake was a bit surprised by seeing them together, and without really thinking much, he just sent them both an invitation making them both stop on the spot. They looked at each other and exchanged a few words as they both disappeared only to appear in the booth.

They were briefly disorientated before they both spotted him. Jake had already made his mask invisible by now, and even if he couldn't remember if they had ever seen his face before, his aura was no doubt recognizable.

"Yo, long time no see!" Roman greeted happily as Felicia gave a more subtle greeting.

"It's only been like two weeks," Jake rightfully corrected him.

"Felt like an eternity to my poor heart," Roman joked as he went over, finally seeing the others in the room. "Oi, hey there, the name's Roman, and this is my gal Felicia!"

Felicia shifted her legs a bit as he also introduced herself. "Pleasure to make your acquaintances."

Miranda tossed Jake a look as he explained. “We met during a puzzle Vault and solved it together, to then get ambushed by those independent factions. Quite the bonding experience and we talked about them coming to Haven after too.”

“Ah,” Miranda said as she introduced herself. “Pleasure to meet you two; I am Miranda, the city leader of Haven, and on account of the city, you two would be more than welcome to come. We are always open to more powerful D-grades.”

Jake decided to identify them while they exchanged pleasantries, and he saw Roman had actually made some damn good progress.

[Human – lvl 125]

He then saw the staff the guy carried around as he put two and two together. Roman had just been able to use the staff and now carried it around like it was his child. He knew for a fact the guy had spatial storage. But, being kind, Jake chose to not tease him. At least not about that.

“So... you two?” Jake said teasingly to Roman.

“Aye!” he instantly agreed with not a single trace of shame or embarrassment. “Me an the lass worked together after that damn cube and been thick as thieves ever since!”

He put his arm around Felicia or at least tried to as a palm to the face held him back. Because while he was utterly shameless, Felicia was a bit more of the reserved type as she answered with her hand still on Roman’s chin: “We work well together...”

Jake just chuckled as he invited them to stay in the room as they talked a bit about how they spent the rest of the Hunt. Apparently, the two of them had gone on for a few more days, mainly just hunting things, until they finally came to a Vault with no one else around.

That Vault had proven to be a bit too far above their abilities and made them both leave the Hunt. Interestingly enough, they had been in physical contact with each other while leaving the Hunt, making them both end up in the same place once out. Afterward, they concluded this was likely due to them both not joining from any city, as the same didn't seem true for others. They had also both gotten lucky as fuck and managed to hold on, so they left right at the time the Monarch was triggered, allowing them to keep all their stuff.

As they finished up their conversation, the timer slowly reached zero as the first phase of the Auction officially began.

System Announcement:

The first phase of the Auction has now begun, where all rare rarity items will be sold off. All items will be listed with a set minimum bidding price by the seller, as well as a potential buyout price, allowing anyone to instantly buy the item.

There are a total of 84,913 listings of rare items for sale during this first phase of the Auction. These items will be posted in batches of five hundred a time at two-minute intervals.

Once all items have been posted, there will be a period of one hour before all bidding ends. Items will be posted in order of minimum bets and buyout price. Any item not bought at the end of this phase will be returned to the original seller.

The first batch will be posted in two minutes.

Jake skimmed the message as he did some quick maths.

With five hundred items every two minutes, it would take approximately three hundred and forty minutes to post them all, and with the extra hour, it would be a total of around four hundred minutes. In easier terms, six hours and forty minutes or so with a constant barrage of rare items.

Thank Villy for high stats, Jake thought, with everyone else no doubt thinking something similar. Five hundred items every two minutes, or more than four a second, did seem extreme, but honestly? It was manageable if you put your mind to it and focused only on going through them without any distractions. Jake for sure could do it, and he had a feeling merchants were especially suited for the task.

As for Sultan, he did not hesitate for a moment as he hurried over to a chair and took out his usual small black book as he sat down and closed his eyes to enter meditation. The others around him did the same as they found chairs or just sat on the floor, even the otherwise unserious Roman shifting his mood.

Jake himself also found a comfortable chair and moved it to the large window panel as he stared down at the massive hall where he saw tens of thousands in total. Even then, Jake was certain many factions had not brought everyone, or not everyone was in the hall. This is without mentioning the many people in the booths too.

As he sat there looking out, the first batch came. An interface appeared before him, looking straight out of a videogame auction system. But an improved VR version. He could even mentally categorize items, and just by thinking about what he wanted to see, they appeared.

Yet, just as they appeared, a few also began disappearing as they were bought out. The bidding numbers rapidly began climbing on nearly everything. He also pretty much confirmed that the information about an item was based on your ability to identify them based on the descriptions.

But a few items also had small notes or descriptions left by the seller, and there were even a few bundles of items. Checking everything, he did not find much interesting but did begin to get an idea of the prices. They seemed to mainly be in the tens of thousands to a hundred thousand for rare items, but he did also see some reach over a million. These were primarily those auxiliary tools, and the most expensive of the rare items was going for over one million and two hundred thousand. Coincidentally, it was a cauldron.

Jake was a bit shocked at the high prices and decided to check his own Credit balance to see how much he actually had, and...

Credits Available: 239,777,158

Well... it was higher than expected? Jake had to admit he was more than a little surprised at having earned over a hundred million Credits since the last time he checked. Sure, he had sold a lot of stuff through Lillian on the System Store, including a buttload of potions, each one going for sometimes upwards of a hundred thou-

Oh, now it suddenly made a lot more sense. Sure, he had also spent a bit, but he was still way up since leaving the Tutorial. As he sat there, he even saw the number go up by around four hundred thousand

as no doubt one of his many items was sold, with the contract immediately activating and Sultan giving him his funds.

A new batch soon appeared, and Jake quickly skimmed it and found nothing of interest there either. Well, besides the alchemy stuff. But most things could not be outright bought out but required one to bid, and quite frankly, Jake had no patience to sit and keep track of potentially thousands of items for over six hours.

He still kept up for two more batches as Jake just shook his head, not bothering anymore. Instead, he took out his cauldron and decided to make some money. No rules had said you can't directly trade in between the bidding sessions, so why not grind out a mass of potions during this time?

He was joined by Sylphie, who didn't bid on anything. Probably because she didn't have any money. Jake sat close to the glass as he summoned his cauldron and got to work. Jake had not been crafting anything ever since before the Treasure Hunt, and even back then, he nearly exclusively made elixirs. Would elixirs potentially make him more money to make? Maybe, but Jake honestly had a feeling potions would sell better simply due to their high demand and consumption. Meanwhile, he doubted a lot of major factions would spend a lot on elixirs, as he was certain they already had other alchemists able to make them.

Even if Jake could make better elixirs giving five stats instead of three... it didn't matter. No, better make potions where the numbers just went up based on how good he had gotten. Besides, there was a final reason he wanted to make potions.

Even before, Jake had begun integrating his own arcane mana to faster break down the ingredients in a fast yet quick and stable way, but now his skills had grown even more. Even ignoring his awakened Arcane Awakening, he had just improved his control in every way.

With that in mind, Jake decided to go all out as he began his first crafting session in a while, in the middle of a monumental auction event everyone else was deeply immersed in.

Well, besides Sylphie. She instead began doing some weird magic practice of her own, looking damn cute while doing it.

Chapter 362 - A Brief Intermission

Jake grinded it out like never before as he did his alchemy while completely and utterly ignoring the entire auction going on around him. He had chosen to focus on mana potion primarily but also done a fair deal of health potions because he knew those usually sold the best.

He actively used his arcane mana even more than before in place of pure mana. While he could still control pure mana and even had to in some instances, the more he crafted, the more he could phase out. He still had to infuse pure mana into the entire brew to make the potion as if he didn't, it would fail, or at best, he would end up making a potion only he could use that wasn't even as good.

How did he know this? Because he had made one batch of such potions.

[Arcane Mana Potion (Common)] – Restores 11783 arcane mana when consumed.

At first, Jake was shocked upon seeing they were not Soulbound in any way and promptly had Sylphie test one by drinking it. The result? She thought it tasted “yucky” and did not restore any resources for her, killing Jake's dreams of having found a new way to make better mana potions.

But... even if others could use them, his regular ones were just better:

[Mana Potion (Common)] - Restores 14314 mana when consumed.

In his humble opinion, fourteen thousand mana was a fuckton, but one had to remember Jake had a mana pool of over forty-eight thousand now. He was also still considering when he would learn to make uncommon-rarity versions and should probably just get his shit together and read a book on it or ask Villy, but that was all stuff for later.

Secondly was, of course, health potions. While they were great, they were far from as good as his mana ones.

[Health Potion (Common)] - Restores 9138 health when consumed.

Still respectable, if he had to say so himself and in proportion to his thirty thousand health pool, it was about as good as the mana ones. Jake had around a hundred and twenty health potions and over two hundred mana potions made during these six and a half hours, and when he looked at Sylphie, he was still confused about what she was doing.

Sylphie had made two small green wind elemental-looking things that were now in a fistfight as Sylphie both seemed to control them and cheer whenever one landed a hit. Jake did not say anything as he would always advocate for more mana practice for the young. He still thought it was kind of weird, especially how the elementals seemed almost alive.

Must be that Sylphian heritage, Jake reckoned as he took a look around the room, seeing everyone still immersed in the auctioning.

Jake just shook his head as he saw there were only five or so minutes left. Not enough to start another batch, that was for sure. Instead, he began considering ways to use his arcane mana more, also if it was just to make Jake-specific potions.

The issue with his arcane affinity being mixed into an actual potion was that it wasn't really safe for consumption. The stable element could be consumed but would take more energy to break down and reabsorb than if it was just pure, and the destructive element would rather burn his insides than restore mana.

Jake had a feeling he could reach an equilibrium where he would be able to reabsorb the energy, but that would take some time. During this time, Jake had also reflected a bit on his talk with Eron about vital energy to try and improve his health potions, but it was actually surprisingly useless.

Eron was all about controlling your own vital energy and only your own. Making a health potion was all about making energy others could absorb easily within the parameters set by the system. The two philosophies just simply didn't mix. There were a few parts just on general manipulation, but it was negligible.

Well, there was also the notebook, but Jake still didn't get anything in it. To his eyes, it was all just headache-inducing scribbles.

As he sat there thinking, he noticed most of the others were more focused than ever as he saw the timer about to reach zero. Sultan looked sweaty and tired, like he had just been in a battle to the death, with Roman scowling and muttering curses at "some bloody bastard" that kept outbidding him.

Jake stood up and looked down at the hall with the same situation playing out everywhere. He smiled as he also checked the menu himself and saw that most of the items had been sold by now. Looking at the logs in the interface, he saw that all items had only been up for an hour total before being sold unless

active betting was still going on. This meant that here in the last stretch, the most hotly sought-after items and the last batch of five hundred were the only things left.

Out of curiosity, he checked out the most expensive item, sitting at a whopping six million Credits.

[Damaged Transportation Pod (Rare)] – A pod created to transport individuals over a long distance. This pod was originally made to allow the weaker denizens of Yalsten to travel outside their realm safely through wormholes, and the vehicle has an incredibly high resistance to all space magic. The inside of the pod is spatially expanded. Due to damages incurred during an escape and subsequent decay of the entire vehicle, it has led to a severe decrease in rarity. The pod is still functional but has severely limited speed and limited spatial expansion. During the escape, the generator was damaged, making the pod require a constant power infusion too.

Jake read the item... and seeing it be so popular made perfect sense to him. Vehicles like these were big and often worth a lot just for their materials alone and were items one could often use for a long time. The speed was not determined by the pod alone either, but primarily the operator up to a certain limit.

Reading the note attached to it, it also became even clearer. The sale included a notebook on how to repair it created by a vampire from Yalsten and some basic details of how the pod worked, the size, and stuff like that. He wondered if the person who had put it up had just lied to raise the price, but then again, the system probably had some safeguards for that

Either way, Jake had no desire to bid on it. He didn't need a car, and besides, teleport-walking was way more healthy and better for the environment.

He saw it slowly go up a bit more in price until finally, the first phase of the auction ended, and a wave of relief went through the room at an almost palpable level. Sylphie also cheered as the small elemental

on the right won the fight as she flew up and landed on his head again. Jake just chuckled and rubbed her head as people looked at him.

“You guys got anything good?” Jake asked as he stood there in front of the glass panel – two big piles of potions on the ground off to his side.

Miranda was the first to answer as she got up. “Only a few things for myself personally, primarily for rituals... what have you been doing?”

The question felt more like a jab than an actual question as Jake just gestured to the potions, but before he could say anything, Sultan spoke up: “You’re selling those during the intermission?”

“Actually, I hoped you would be selling those during the intermission,” Jake answered. “Because I would sell them way too cheap or end up just giving them all away for free.”

Sultan just nodded as he waved his hand, and a contract flew over to Jake. He skimmed it and saw that Sultan would take a 5% commission as an “urgency and expedition fee” or some bullshit like that. Jake agreed as he ultimately would earn more, and he really didn’t want to sell himself. As for getting Miranda to do it? Well, she was already on her way out the moment the system message appeared.

System Announcement:

Phase one of the auction has concluded! There will now be a one-hour intermission before the next phase begins. The next phase will include all epic rarity items. During this intermission, all prior listings can be edited freely, and new ones placed.

"I will see you all in the next phase," Miranda said as she bowed and swiftly left the booth, teaching Jake that anyone could leave at any point. Jake didn't need to think about what Miranda would be doing either, as she no doubt had a lot of diplomacy stuff to do.

Sultan went over and swept up all his potions after Jake had signed the contract before disappearing too. After a brief talk with Roman and the others, they all dispersed, with Roman and Felicia chatting a bit with Neil and his party. Sylphie jumped off his head and disappeared by herself without a chirp too. As for Jake? Jake would go and talk to the old man about a few things.

Reika walked with her Great-Grandfather as she escorted him to one of the side rooms along with many other members of the clan. During this week, she had fought off snakes and opportunists left and right who attempted to take advantage of the Patriarch's weakness. What frustrated her the most was that she couldn't even protect him properly, as he had forbidden her from sharing details of why he was weak, including the fact that it was even temporary or if it would have any permanent effects.

Which had inadvertently led to many concluding it would have permanent consequences.

It was frustrating, but she trusted the Patriarch.

"Reika, would you kindly ask the others to stay outside while we talk to our guest?" he asked.

She was confused about who he was talking about as she felt the approaching presence. Reika turned her head as she saw Jake walk over, a mask covering his face and an almost physical aura all around him. Compared to the time they solved the puzzle during the Hunt, he felt much more powerful... and he truly was based on his fight with the Patriarch.

He walked over as he stopped in front of the Sword Saint, not even sparing a glance for any of the clan members around. Jake and the Patriarch's auras were incomparable at the current time, yet both men stood tall as Jake spoke: "I believe we have things to discuss?"

The Sword Saint smiled. "That we do," he answered as he motioned for Jake to follow him into the chamber. Reika prepared to stay outside as he spoke up again. "Please, if you would come too?"

Reika perked up and instantly followed, leaving the many opportunistic politicians behind her. Perhaps he did not know it, but Jake approaching the Patriarch like an equal was a massive wrench in the works for many of those assholes.

Perhaps he did have a better eye for political maneuvering than she gave him credit for.

Jake, the old man, and Reika entered the side room together as the door shut behind them, cutting off the room from the outside world entirely through the power of system-fuckery. Jake guessed he was the only one who could see through it through the use of Bloodline-fuckery, as that was one of the only counters to system-fuckery in existence. Either way, good riddance because those people outside looked annoying.

They did not exchange any words as they found themselves a place to sit down, Reika and the Saint on one side, Jake on the other.

"Good fight," was the first thing Jake said with a smile.

"That it was," the old man agreed with a hearty laugh. "But perhaps we lost ourselves a little towards the end."

"It happens," Jake just shrugged as he snickered. "Anyway, you doing okay? That kind of skill can be draining from what I know."

"For now, I am still weak, but in due time I shall return to my usual state," he answered, not explaining more. Jake respected that as he just moved on.

"So... what to do with that Legacy thing and all the other stuff?"

"Oh, I already put it up for auction," the Sword Saint answered promptly.

Jake was taken aback but swiftly caught on. "Damn, I didn't know yelling about springtime led to a sense of humor."

"Spring leads to many things," he just answered with a mysterious smile. "As for who actually won... I believe it makes the most sense to call it a tie?"

Jake looked the old man dead in the eye when he also caught the small scar above the Saints ear as he shook his head. "No... no, I lost."

“Oh?”

“I was at a higher level and just did worse than you. Besides... I would have died first,” Jake continued to shake his head. “Also, I don’t wanna become a vampire.”

“Neither do I... but very well, I shall respect your decision. However, I cannot fully accept the victory, so how about we make a deal? One of those altars and a single coffin, and you will have unlimited access to the artifact, and I will even throw in something extra?” the Sword Saint proposed.

“Depends; what are you tossing in?”

“That shall be secret for now,” he answered mysteriously. “What do you say?”

Jake, letting curiosity get the better of him as he summoned a coffin and an altar for the Saint and Reika. He scooped it up as Jake asked again. “So?”

“Reika will bring it when she comes to Haven,” the Sword Saint answered with a chuckle. “It isn’t quite done yet.”

“Now I’m just getting more curious.”

“Curiosity has never killed anyone.”

“Pretty sure curiosity is a leading cause of death among cats,” Jake countered.

“You must take solace in that you are not a cat then,” the Saint chuckled as they both smiled.

Having dealt with the whole duel situation, Jake moved on to something else he had thought about.

“Based on what you said, you don’t have a blessing, do you?” he asked.

The Sword Saint’s mood shifted a bit. “No, I do not, and I don’t plan on getting one either.”

“Why not?” Jake asked.

“I would think you would understand of all people that I will not subordinate myself nor my clan to a divine power,” the old man answered. “It does baffle me why you have accepted that.”

“Because I haven’t?” Jake just answered, a bit confused. “I just have the blessing for all the great stats and benefits it gives, and the Viper and I are buddies. He’s never told me to do anything, and I’ve never told him to do anything for me either. Is there a power imbalance? Sure, but I am sure as hell not some servant, and I think he could laugh at the sentiment.”

The old man frowned. "Blessings are, to my knowledge, investments, and a god will require a return."

"Sure, I heard that too, but the Viper is happy enough if I just get strong and do well in events, and apparently, that benefits him plenty. Not that I think the Viper cares. I have also seen other cases of gods quite frankly not giving a fuck what their blessed are up to or see it all more as a transactional relationship. Perhaps not equal, but not where one party can order the other," Jake explained, continuing.

"I guess what I am saying is... find a god that is not a dick, get a blessing, and get stronger, so I don't roll you next time," Jake taunted with a snicker. "The benefits are just too large."

"You make it sound simple," the Saint chuckled as he shook his head.

"Honestly? With that skill, you're a special boy too now. You managed to, at worst, get a tie with the Chosen of the Malefic Viper while at a lower level, and at best, you beat me. You got plenty of capital to negotiate with; just make it clear you are no one's servant," Jake said.

"It sounds like you're trying to recruit me."

"Nah, fuck that, don't make things weird now. There can only be one Chosen," Jake waved it off. "Better go for some other powerful god. You may look old, but you're still young on the inside. Just put yourself out there; there are plenty of fish in the sea! Or well, gods in the multiverse."

The Sword Saint nodded. "I shall take it up for consideration."

“Wouldn’t ask for more,” Jake said as he got on something else from his talk with Villy. “By the way... do you feel like the sword is an extension of your body?”

“Naturally,” the Saint answered.

“So, you actually, literally, feel the blade?” he clarified.

“Yes,” the Sword Saint answered, amused.

“Doesn’t it hurt like fuck when you block with it then?” Jake asked intelligently.

A question that was the start of Jake asking questions some people would categorize as “moronic,” making it truly lucky they were in a closed-off space.

Chapter 363 - An Epic Mixed Bag

Jake had left the chamber with the Sword Saint enlightened as to the path of a true swordsman. He even learned that Reika also knew and could feel her blade, just like her great grandfather. Jake had to admit it made him feel a bit inadequate.

Once he was out, the rabble was still there, and Jake just ignored them as he walked past. He had stayed in there for a good forty-five minutes, and while the start was serious, it eventually divulged into something far more casual, and Jake quickly got a feeling that the political arena of the Noboru clan was quite an annoying one.

He was glad he avoided all that shit by just having Miranda handle everything. At worst, she could tell him if someone needed a good smacking, and if she really needed him to do something, she would at least tell him how to.

Making his way back to the booth, he found everyone besides Sultan, Miranda, and Sylphie already back, with some likely not having left. One such person was the man standing at what looked like a half-broken massive steel bullet with a book in one hand and a tablet in the other.

Jake identified the weird metal thing that was nearly five meters long and a meter tall.

[Damaged Transportation Pod (Rare)] – A pod created to transport individuals over a-

“Hey Arnold, didn’t know you were the one to buy it,” Jake said as he walked over with interest.

“Mm,” he answered, not looking up as he kept staring at the tablet.

“Think you can fix it?”

“Mm.”

“Think it can block a full-strength Powershot?” Jake finally asked, getting the man’s attention as he looked up.

“In its current state? Doubtful, your arcane affinity is rather destructive. But I believe it shall be fixable with the right materials,” Arnold answered.

“It was quite expensive too,” Jake noted. “Didn’t know you were such a mogul to splurge on a garage project like this.”

Arnold did not have to answer as Sultan appeared behind Jake, having teleported in. “Arnold is easily in a position to afford it.”

“Oh, he’s rich?” Jake asked, a bit confused. The man never left his damn workshop, so Jake didn’t even know how he would earn anything.

“While I will not divulge the assets of my client, I can share that he made substantial gains from the system store, and I believe he is the third richest in Haven, behind you and me,” Sultan explained, also making Jake aware that Sultan had been selling for Arnold all along.

Now that he thought about it, he had learned that Arnold bought a lot from the store earlier. With how immersed he was in his work, it made sense he outsourced everything non-tinker related. It was a bit like how Jake had outsourced for to Lillian to get him things like new glass bottles and herbs.

Arnold himself just nodded at the words. “Many creations prove ultimately useless or are merely middle-step demos. No reason not to sell them to procure more funds.”

"Makes sense," Jake agreed, turning to Sultan – Arnold already looking like he was back in his own world. "So, how did it go with the potions? Sold any?"

Sultan just shook his head as he smiled. "Sold out within the first fifteen minutes, and that was only because I refused to make any transactions before I had a good feeling for the price."

"So...?"

"Two hundred and eight mana potions sold with your share being a total of 11,231,522," Sultan began as Jake nodded. Fifty-four thousand or so per potion was pretty damn good. "As for the health potions... one hundred and twenty-two sold for a total of 16,653,931 Credits."

"Damn... that's pretty damn good for six hours or so of work," Jake said, tallying it up to a bit below twenty-seven million in total. "People seriously buy health potions for like a hundred and thirty-five thousand each? That is as much as one of the better rare weapons."

Sultan shook his head again. "The value of these potions is only this high due to scarcity. If you sold just a thousand of each, the price would drop substantially. It was primarily bought by Valhal, the Holy Church, and independent factions to give to their most talented fighters, with a few also going to solo parties or individuals. A good health potion can mean the difference between life and death, and yours are the best available currently. Giving the best is also a show of faith and a commitment towards their talents, giving them symbolic meaning."

"I see. Makes sense," Jake said, nodding along. "Anything else I should know?"

“Nothing much, but is there any progress on the Altar and Coffins?” Sultan asked. “I know you had a meeting with the Patriarch of the Noboru Clan.”

“Oh yeah,” Jake said. “Let’s wait for Miranda to be back; I want to ask for her opinion. But do you even think they will sell, considering how niche they are and the fact there are so many of them?”

“Hm, I do think their value will be below many other ancient rarity listings. However, the materials alone will hold substantial value, and I do think factions can find a use for the items themselves. The coffins especially could prove useful if one wishes to research temporal magic due to the peculiar effect of the enchantments.”

“I guess,” Jake said as he waited for Miranda to get back - a wait that was short as Miranda popped into the booth only a dozen or so seconds later.

Seeing they were pressed for time, Jake quickly summoned one of each. “Quick, Miranda, keep or sell? Want any? Got eight of each!”

[Yalsten Altar of the Damned (Ancient)] – An altar created by an extremely skilled crafter from the long-perished world of Yalsten, using a single unbroken piece of an unknown metal. The metal of the altar itself makes it near-indestructible for any being below A-grade. This altar has absorbed vast amounts of blood to empower it further, as countless sacrifices have been made upon it. It has been enchanted further to increase the effectiveness of all rituals made using it as a catalyst. The effect of all sacrificial rituals increased further. Faint Records and echoes of old rituals remain imprinted upon the altar, making it passively infuse anyone lying upon it with the life energy of those once sacrificed upon it. Requirements: N/A

[Yalsten Coffin of Eternal Slumber (Ancient)] – A coffin created by an extremely skilled crafter from the long-perished world of Yalsten from an unknown metal that has been left untouched by the ages, slowly soaking in the Records of history and the concept of time. The metal of the coffin itself makes it near-indestructible for any being below A-grade. The runes on the coffin allow any who slumber within to be preserved longer, as time is distorted while inside the coffin. Once inside, enter a special type of meditation that will keep all resources fully replenished and allow you to enter deep sleep, making time pass unnoticed while lessening aging significantly. All effects are amplified for vampires, especially when used with Vampiric Slumber. Requirements: N/A

Miranda was put on the spot as she quickly looked at both. “I can use five of the altars to set up a pentagram formation with them as corner catalysts. As for the coffin, I have no comments, but probably keep one for further research. However, it will also be perfectly fine to just se-”

Jake quickly nodded as he cut her off by tossing out two more altars and six more coffins for the merchant. “Take these and put them up for the auction,” Jake said to Sultan, the man happily taking them.

As it happened, the rest of the people from Haven also arrived, Sylphie naturally landing on his head again, with him wondering where she had gone. They had returned just in time as the system message popped up, and it was officially epic item time.

System Announcement:

The second phase of the Auction has now begun, where all epic rarity items will be sold off. All items will be listed with a set minimum bidding price by the seller, as well as a potential buyout price, allowing anyone to instantly buy the item.

There are a total of 2,451 listings of epic items for sale during this second phase of the Auction. These items will be posted one at a time in five-second intervals.

Once all items have been posted, there will be a period of one hour before all bidding ends. Items will be posted in order of minimum bets and buyout price. Any item not bought at the end of this phase will be returned to the original seller.

The first item will be posted in two minutes.

Jake quickly skimmed it, did the quick maths, and calculated this phase would last two hundred and four minutes and fifteen seconds. With the extra hour, that added up to four hours and twenty-four minutes of auctioning. There were also substantially fewer items in this phase than the last, which made sense as epic items got a lot rarer.

He considered if he would do alchemy this time around but decided to keep an eye out. Because during this Auction as a whole, he did have one plan – get a full set of equipment, or at least upgrade where he could.

He did a quick check of money and saw it had grown by around fifty million since the last time he checked. Credits Available: 291,258,840

It wasn't a lot, but one had to remember rare items only sold for like a hundred thousand on the high end, and he sold two hundred and something. Shit, he actually got more from the potions than all of his rare items... which was a bit sad.

Either way, the two minutes passed, and Jake sat ready as the first item appeared before him.

[Staff of-]

Five seconds of his life... wasted.

[Sandals of-]

Ignoring the question of who the hell makes epic-rarity sandals... wasted.

This kept on, as Jake saw item after item he had no interest in. Time slowly ticked by as Jake began to notice the overabundance of staves and robes on the market. He ignored all headwear, footwear, gloves, rings, necklaces and did not look much out for anything other than chest armor and bracers, and even then, he was hesitant to buy anything epic if he could potentially get ancient rarity by waiting a few hours. Thus he decided to only buy anything if it was dirt cheap.

As for why he was a bit more open to buying chest armor and bracers? Well, because his current ones were shit. Especially his bracers:

[Leather Bracers of Peerless Deflection (Rare)] - Bracers made from tempered leather from a powerful E-grade beast. Produced by an even more powerful craftsman. Borrowing from the Records of the beast it is made from, these bracers have the ability to deflect range attacks when infused with mana.
Enchantments: Self-Repair. +25 Agility, + 15 Endurance. Requirements: Lvl 40+ in any humanoid race

It was one of his oldest pieces of equipment, and he had gotten it the same time as the Scimitar of Cursed Hunger. The difference was, the Scimitar was a Soulbound cursed weapon that grew the more vital energy it absorbed, while the bracers just kept being shit. The enchantment to deflect attacks had also been utterly useless and far too weak to do anything against anything he fought.

The second item in the “I got shit and need new” category was his chestpiece. While it wasn’t that long since Jake got an upgrade, the upgrade he got was still bad.

[Leather Chestguard of the Juvenile Bristleback (Uncommon)] - A chestplate made from the tough leather of a young Bristleback. Created by a talented leatherworker, the workmanship is simple but effective. Has been infused with a Beastcore, making this chestpiece even more durable and enhances the wearer’s resilience. Enchantments: +200 Toughness, +75 Endurance, +50 Vitality. Requirements: Lvl 100+ in any humanoid race

Also, unless he bought something Soulbound, he could always find other uses or just have Sultan sell it elsewhere at another time. With all of that in mind, he waited patiently as the items flew by him one by one.

Nope.

Shit.

Neat, but no.

Looks downright painful to wear.

That one is just... hm...

[Bracers of Cursed Thorns (Epic)] – A pair of bracers formed from the vine of an unknown but highly toxic plant-like lifeform by a vampire from Yalsten long ago. Allows the user to infuse the bracers with mana, releasing highly toxic thorns that can be used in melee or ejected as projectiles. Due to the remnant connection with the main body during the crafting process of these bracers, a curse was placed upon them to release spikes that penetrate into the wearer's body, injecting the highly toxic poison. Enchantment: +250 Vitality, +150 Agility. Cursed Thorns. Requirements: lvl 135+ in any humanoid race

Jake studied it a bit more, and when he focused, a mental image of what they looked like even appeared. They were entirely black and looked like someone had taken a rose stalk and wrapped it around an arm many times to form them and then done that twice to make a pair.

He also took notice of the surprisingly high level-requirement. Most other epic items were at 130 or below, and even if this one was only 135, it was still above average.

Lastly, one had to address the elephant in the room: they were bloody cursed. Jake observed as the price did go up a bit, soon reaching ninety thousand Credits, but out of all the items that had appeared so far, it was one of the ones with the lowest level of interest. Jake could totally get why; it had to suck to wear bracers that liked to stab you.

Suck for everyone besides Jake. Because what he saw was a fast and effective way to make himself bleed to attack with Blood of the Malefic Viper. Oh, highly toxic thorns would inject poison into him? What's that, free bonus mana regen from Palate of the Malefic Viper? Sign me up!

Shit, if they turned out to still suck, he could just transmute them and mess with the curse a bit like his Scimitar of Cursed Hunger. After still drinking down some of that sweet poison for Palate first, naturally. Of course, the fact that they were damn cheap didn't hurt either. He kept an eye on them for now as he placed a bid a thousand above the current one, bringing it to ninety-seven thousand.

Moving on, Jake kept watching as items appeared one after another every five seconds. The interface was highly adaptable, and Jake made it so the bracers were always 'pinned' so he could see them. For half an hour, no bid came until someone placed another thousand, making Jake decide to wait. He wanted to make it seem like there was little interest, after all. Just two people getting into a bidding war could lead to a terrible hike in price, and he wanted to avoid that, no matter how rich he was.

An hour into the bidding, Jake had only placed that single bid, even if a lot of interesting stuff had appeared. Honestly, a few chestpieces did pop up too. All of them were just straight-up better than what he had, but he couldn't bring himself to bid on them. He still hoped something really good or special would pop up or something ancient rarity in the next phase. Yes, Jake was greedy.

Beginning to get bored, he considered doing something else. Yet a few minutes later, something else caught his eye.

[Unattuned Focusing Iris (Epic)] – An unattuned focusing iris that will amplify any unattuned mana channeled through it. The iris will become attuned if a substantial amount of mana of a specific affinity is channeled through it. Possesses a myriad of alchemical uses.

It was such a simple item, and when Jake focused on it, he saw it was nothing more than a small malleable glass marble that looked almost semi-liquid. Like one could form it just by using one's hands. Then, as he was considering applications, he saw the price instantly reach two hundred thousand. Then three hundred. Five hundred. A million. Two million. Three.

Jake decided to just bail out there and then as he promptly moved on. Items kept popping up, and he kept skipping them. It was good Sultan handled all the alchemy buying, and he hoped the guy ignored stuff like that Iris, which had just reached six million in price.

Time slowly ticked by, and Jake did bid on a few things, but he could never bring himself to go very high, so he always found himself outbid. He also ignored all alchemy products as he feared he would just be bidding against himself with Sultan... and besides, he really had no idea what things were really worth. It was really a mixed bag from start to end, and he had a feeling many of the epic items sold were just stuff no one else wanted to use themselves due to something “wrong” with it.

In the end, the entire epic item rarity phase passed with Jake only watching the bracers like a hawk while playing with a hawk by making arcane hawks that battled with a green hawk’s summoned elemental hawks.

Chapter 364 - A Cursed Intermission

The entire rest of the epic item auction went pretty uneventfully. Jake sat on his ass and kept watching the bracers the whole time, even though barely anyone bid on them. Well, he did also spend a majority of his time playing with Sylphie – his arcane conjurations clearly better boxers than Sylphie’s.

The cursed bracers ended up only costing him a bit below two hundred thousand Credits, which honestly wasn’t that bad. A difference between the rare auction and the epic auction was that everything was available until the very end. Jake did feel like it was a bit unfair, as some items were only up for around an hour, while others were up for several hours, but, hey, what can you do about it?

The moment the auction ended, he just had the bracers directly deposited into his inventory without any fanfare, and at the same time, he also saw his total Credits jump more than two hundred million as every single item he had put up was sold off.

Credits Available: 498,870,214

With around forty items for sale total, he quickly calculated they had sold for about five million each on average. He wasn't sure if that was good or bad, but it sure as hell was a lot better than the rare items by a huge margin. Jake also truly began to realize he had wasted his money-making potential before this event. While he had earned a lot of money by selling, he had also bought a lot, but if he just sold off things like materials or elixirs or potions at a steady pace, he could have probably made a few hundred million.

Then again, what would the fun in that be? Jake didn't really like just grinding out the same mass-produced potions over and over.

Looking at the prices, he saw that the cheapest epic rarity item had gone for only thirty thousand and was some nugget of metal apparently super hard to work with. The most expensive was that god damn Focusing Iris from earlier, which went for over fifty million.

If this entire auction event had taught Jake one thing so far, it was that rarity really wasn't everything. Equipment with many potential users had a somewhat predictable price of between two and eight million for epic items, but those specialty items could go for either insanely high prices or barely anything.

He had also been told that epic rarity equipment was kind of in a weird spot currently on Earth. On the one hand, they were rare and powerful, but on the other hand, not rare or powerful enough to not give out and actively use. This meant that most epic-rarity items were actively used by their factions, leading to fewer on the market. According to Sultan, they would still see a way better ratio of epic to ancient items, despite the incredibly low rare-to-epic item ratio.

System Announce-

Jake quickly skimmed it and saw it was pretty much the same as last time, telling him of a one-hour intermission between this phase and the next. Jake considered having some fun with his new bracers but decided not to. Instead, he should probably go talk to Casper to figure out future plans with that entire Root of Eternal Resentment business.

Sylphie communicated with him she was going to chat with Carmen, and Miranda passed by and said she had a meeting with some independent cities about something. Others also quickly left, with Sultan only spending a bit of time putting the altars and coffins up for sale.

With no reason to stay, Jake quickly teleported out of his booth and appeared on the ground below it. He scouted the chamber and spotted the booth housing the undead faction, with Casper and Priscilla both appearing below it.

On a side note, Jake came to learn that not all of the booths were actually being used. Reika and the Sword Saint had both earned a booth as an example, but they used the same, leaving one empty. The undead faction might have been the same as Casper for sure had earned one, and maybe Priscilla too. Either way, it was good they were together as that made things simple.

With a few steps, Jake appeared close to them. It was easy enough to find and approach them, especially with how humans still tended to avoid the Risen. Jake honestly didn't get it, but then again, he wasn't racist.

Casper spotted him when he got close and just waved for him to come over. Jake walked over and greeted them both, and after exchanging pleasantries, they began walking towards a side chamber to discuss things.

Once inside, the door shut behind them. The ones who had gone were Jake, Priscilla, Casper, and four other people. Two whom Jake recognized as members of Priscilla's party, and two that looked and felt more like administrative personnel or traders.

"So, gotten anything good?" Jake asked Casper first thing.

"Eh, a few things here and there, but nothing massive. Saving my Credits for the ancient rarity auction coming up. How about you?" his undead pal asked.

"A bit of the same. I got some cursed epic bracers but haven't bought anything else, though I have buy-orders out for all-things alchemy," Jake shrugged.

"Speaking of cursed things," Casper said, smiling. "Isn't that why we are here? You still got the Root of Eternal Resentment?"

"Sure do," Jake confirmed, seeing all of the Risen present perk up. "Now, what is this Root? And don't give me any bullshit."

"The item is a conduit of curses that-" one of the businessmen began as Casper cut in.

"It's the cursed Root of the tree that is the cause of the special mist within Yalsten and was a natural treasure of immense power before the curse corrupted and eroded the entire tree till only a single Root remained," Casper said.

The other Risen did not hold back their slightly annoyed looks directed at Casper, as Jake ignored them. "So, what exactly do you need it for?"

Priscilla clearly decided to also come clean as she explained. "The Root of Eternal Resentment has all of the curse energy from within Yalsten and is naturally a treasure of immense value. Yalsten had unique energy, improving and sometimes even creating items and natural treasures due to it, making it an incredible land of treasures and one of the reasons why A-grades and even an S-grade cared so much about it. Some even say the world itself was a natural treasure.

"We already have the albeit slightly damaged World Core of Yalsten, and if we combine it with the Root, we may be able to create a world similar to it. We Risen are inherently in a risky position, and it will allow us to potentially flee or relocate off the planet entirely in a worst-case scenario. In a best-case scenario, we can make a land especially suited for our kind and even transform the natural environment to be more suitable for us and the treasures we need. We need far more death-affinity treasures and materials than anyone else, and I doubt the other inhabitants of Earth are fine with us creating fields of death just for farming."

"Huh," Jake said as he considered it. He looked at Casper, who nodded in confirmation. "Not to come off as a dick, but I had honestly assumed something far more nefarious considering it is a Root filled with immense curse energy."

"Actually kinda hard now after Yalsten is gone for good. The resentment of the curse has no clear-cut target and is thus aimless and undirected. It is only under rare circumstances where directionless curse energy does not simply disperse but remains sealed and accessible," Casper explained.

"True, I don't get any particular desire to do anything while holding it," Jake recognized. "But I am still not sure what you need the curse energy for and not just the properties of the Root itself. From what I can assume, the World Core holds all the required energy to create the world itself and is one part of the puzzle, so isn't the Root just a source that will allow for the mist-like energy to be created?"

Casper and Priscilla both looked at him, a bit surprised. "What? I know stuff! This is just like alchemy, but with a world instead of herbs," Jake muttered, slightly offended.

"I'm just surprised; you're usually amazingly ignorant for someone with one of the most knowledgeable gods in the multiverse on speed-dial," Casper said, taking an obvious jab. "But yeah, you're right. The curse energy itself is not needed, but we can transform a part of it and use it for other purposes. That Root holds enough pure curse energy to corrupt several planets if it had direction."

"For real?"

"Yeah, though obviously none of us can properly use it. If we go by pure energy, the divine item left by Sanguine could turn our entire solar system to dust if extracted and turned into a weapon. It is a bit of a moot point, though, as anyone actually capable of doing that would be able to do so anyway," Casper said, shaking his head.

"Do you plan on planting the Root somehow?" Jake asked. He saw the officials behind Casper shift a bit as they no doubt didn't like Casper and Priscilla sharing so much, but Casper looked like he honestly didn't give a damn.

"Yep, that is precisely what we plan on doing. For it to work, we actually need to purge the Root of curse energy first, but as I mentioned, there are several ways to do that. All we need the Root and tree itself for is the properties that allowed it to contain the curse in the first place."

Jake nodded along. "Won't it take a long time to suck out all the curse energy? As you said, there is a shitload."

“True,” Casper acknowledged. “But it is also highly condensed. I believe it could be great fuel for one of my existing curse weapons, or maybe I will use it to create something else. Again, many possibilities for anyone familiar with curses.”

Jake once more nodded as he got an idea: “Speaking of which, got any idea what exactly is up with this sword?”

He fished out his Scimitar of Cursed Hunger. He had been wondering about the blade for a while, especially the fact that it kept getting stronger. Growth items were damn rare as far as he knew, and to him, it seemed like the damn scimitar just kept getting sharper and more durable the stronger the curse got. Considered that he had a curse-expert right in front of him, it seemed silly not to ask.

Casper looked at the weapon in Jake’s hand. “Sure, I guess. Is it Soulbound?”

“Kind of?” Jake confirmed. It was quasi-Soulbound due to Jake using his arcane affinity and Touch to bind it, so it was somewhat.

“But also cursed,” Casper added on.

“Yep.”

“What were the requirements when you got it first?” he then asked.

“Just Humanoid race,” Jake explained, not really seeing the need to hide anything. He briefly summarized the weapon, how he got it, how he changed it, and how it now grew from absorbing vital energy. Casper seemed very interested throughout as he asked some follow-up questions like if it wanted to compel him to do stuff – big yes on that one – and some other stuff.

Casper looked more and more confused as Jake answered, especially when he said he had used it from the time he was mid-tier E-grade to now. He also explained that not once had he repaired it. However, it was when he explained it mentioned it had absorbed souls Casper looked really bewildered, but his expression was also grave.

“You say the description says it was made of steel soaked in blood... indicating some ritual... and then you destroyed the souls it had absorbed... yet the curse remained and is still growing more powerful...” Casper commented thoughtfully.

“The thing is, normally curses stop working once they fulfill their purpose. The curse on the Root was all about exterminating vampires, and with the total destruction of Yalsten, the resentment has been satisfied. Even if the goal of the resentment is impossible to reach, then the curse won’t get stronger. The Records and curse energy are constant unless it absorbs curse energy, an exact replica of itself. That is how curse-users like myself function. We are the source of the curse. However, what your scimitar does is different... it doesn’t have a goal nor a true source. If my guesses are correct, then you have what is classified as a Sin weapon,” Casper explained.

“Sin weapon?” Jake asked, confused at the term he had never seen before.

“A type of cursed weapon based on sin. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that it is a weapon created based on a concept rather than a cursed weapon created to fulfill a specific goal. In your case, it went from the concept of Debauchery to the concept of Hunger. Also, you mentioned that the scimitar can wane in power if it does not fulfill its purpose, adding further to the legitimacy of this theory.”

Jake considered his words as he tried to summarize them. "So, I got a growth weapon of sorts based on fulfilling a concept?"

"Yes and no," Casper answered. "You got a growth curse, not a weapon per-se. The weapon itself is merely the medium in which it is stored, and if the medium breaks, the curse itself will merely disperse as it is part of a larger concept. Well, that or you can transfer it to a new medium. And to call it a growth curse should kind of set off some red flags... Sin weapons are fucking dangerous. One does not normally use Sin curses in weapons due to it having a user but rather infused in items like altars or other ritualistic items. Sometimes maybe sacrificial daggers... but not something you use on the daily. It's just too dangerous."

"They're that bad?" Jake asked, and this time Priscilla jumped in.

"Any cursed weapon affects the user, but Sin weapons even more so as you are more connected to them. You make them grow and infuse them with new Records, meaning you are an instrument of the curse, and the Records of the curse also begin to affect you. That is why it is generally fine if you only use them sparingly, like during a ritual. The man you took the blade from had gained his class merely due to the blade and had undoubtedly been affected mentally too as time went on due to continued exposure. That is why they are dangerous... the curse will slowly begin to affect you more and more, and a blade based on Hunger holds a very vast concept. It can be the Hunger for anything," she said, Jake hearing some genuine concern. Probably not because she cared about Jake, but because she had learned one of the most powerful people on Earth was using a presumably dangerous weapon.

"Sure, it can get a bit noisy, but I just ignore it," Jake shook his head. He remembered when he picked it up after it had properly digested all the vital energy from Eron. It was a bit grumpy and hungry, but not really an issue, in his opinion.

"I assume you have some skill offering mental resistance, and while that certainly helps, then the influence can slowly creep up on you. It will affect your Records, and it will slowly begin to affect who

you are if it hasn't already. You may think you control the curse, but often it ends up being the curse controlling you," Priscilla tried to warn.

Jake just snickered as he looked at Casper. "You mentioned before that curses are rooted in emotions?"

"Yeah," Casper confirmed. "Which is why they can influence you. Often you don't even notice it before it is too late. I must second Priscilla's warning... using a Sin weapon is risky, and unless you have skills specifically designed to deal with them like me, it will be a bad time. I myself had to go through a pretty shitty time during the tutorial to really get curses, and without guidance from more powerful undead, I may have become a lunatic by now. Even now, I regularly use skills to purge myself of influence and maintain control."

"Yeah... I heard shit was fucked up in the tutorial... it sounds rough..." Jake said, shaking his head as he tried not to dwell on the past. "But I have a feeling it won't be a problem."

"Jake, you don't know what you're dealing with," Casper warned again.

"I am not new to having invasive emotions that try to control me," Jake said, looking Casper in the eyes.

"... alright."

"Anyway," Jake said, wanting to change the mood to something more pleasant. "You say the curse is transferable?"

“Technically,” Casper said. “Currently, it is just embedded in a steel weapon. From what I can see, it is even a pre-system steel weapon, making it kind of shitty. No doubt it is an item from the old world... maybe it was used by some insane noble once upon a time. But know that if you want to attempt to transfer it to something, it needs to be a weapon aligned with the curse... additionally... if you do transfer it, the curse can never get a chance to disperse. Meaning you will have to use your own body as an intermediary medium. That is not a good idea, Jake. Not at fucking all.”

“And you said that the curse energy in the Root of Eternal Resentment is directionless right now...” Jake said, Casper instantly getting his point.

“Jake... empowering a Sin curse with the curse energy from Yalsten would be utter lunacy... and you need a powerful weapon to embed it in... a weapon especially suited to it too. It needs to be a weapon as Sin curses are rather specific... but seriously, man.”

“Like this one?” Jake snickered as he whipped out the ancient-rarity Chimeric weapon from fusing the nine Count weapons.

Casper looked at it. “Jake, that would be batshit insane. The Sin curse will become even stronger than the curse on the Root originally was, and as it is already partly integrated with your body, its influence will be all-encompassing... you may lose yourself entirely. Maybe even to the level of evolving into a monster. Even if you succeed, you won’t be able to utilize the full power of the weapon for a long time. Rethink it.”

“I will take your words into consideration,” Jake said. “But for now, I’ll hold onto the Root. Ah, but we can still figure something out, as I don’t necessarily need the item itself...”

As for if he would actually try to merge three items of considerable power to try and create a cursed weapon of absurd power, potentially threatening the entire planet if it was to fall into the wrong hands?

To try and smash them all together and create a weapon using two different curses, all infused into an ancient-rarity weapon, likely creating something more powerful than the sum of its parts?

Well... from what he gathered, everyone in the room thought it was an absolutely insane idea and was heavily against it. Yet, all Jake heard was a challenge.

Ah, but he was still going to be careful.

He would ask Villy first.

Knowing full well his scaly friend would find the idea hilarious.

Chapter 365 - Actually Buying Things

The undead and Jake talked for a while longer, just chatting and discussing things related to Earth and the struggles of the Risen. Casper didn't say much but mainly let Priscilla outline their difficulties, as quite frankly, he himself barely had any issues these days. He didn't have any family, to begin with, so he didn't go through the struggle of convincing one's parents or a former lover that they were still the same person despite now being undead. Overall, it was pleasant, but soon Jake had to return.

Casper sat back as he watched Jake leave, the ancient rarity auction beginning shortly. He was a bit miffed he had not gained the Root, but he believed Jake would stay true to his promise and trade it with them soon enough.

"Why tell him what to do?" Priscilla asked him once Jake was out of the hall and unable to hear them, her mood changing quite a bit from the welcoming and kind persona she put on in front of others. "The consequences if he becomes consumed by a curse, much less one of Hunger, would be disastrous. You

know that Hunger often expresses itself as pure greed and gluttony, making him a living killing machine.”

”Because he is going to do it anyway, so may as well just tell him what it entails,” Casper explained.
”Trying to dissuade him will only make him more convinced to give it a try.”

”That’s just... moronic,” Priscilla said with exasperation.

”Well, Jake can be a bit of a moron; what can I say? But he is also a moron for whom things just tend to work out. Besides, I doubt the Viper would allow him to do anything that could legitimately risk his life or future.”

Jake knew Villy would totally be up for Jake doing something insanely risky, as long as he got front-row seats to see him do it.

He walked back towards his booth with a brisk pace, already looking forward to doing some funny experimentation after the event. Of course, it was time to do some more auctioning before that.

Jake got back to the booth before Sultan, Miranda, and Sylphie, but he did see Roman and Felicia already back. The two of them sat on a couch, chatting with Eleanor, Christen, and Levi from Neil’s party. The two last members – Neil and Silas – were absent for some reason.

Deciding not to bother them, Jake went over to a corner and summoned his arcane mana to set up a barrier around himself. He got a few glances, but he just motioned for them to ignore him as Jake got to work. As for what Jake was doing? Well, he was eating some healthy greens.

But first, he would have to throw up what he had already eaten.

Jake opened his mouth as Palate of the Malefic Viper activated, and space around him warped as a glowing rock appeared. At the same time, the purpose of his barrier became clear as incredible heat bombarded it.

Knowing he could not put it in his normal spatial storage necklace, Jake took out the legendary storage cube. He activated it, and the Suncore Fragment was stored without any resistance. Happy it worked, Jake took out the Root of Eternal Resentment, and a good gobble later, it was stored inside of his Palate of the Malefic Viper. It was a natural treasure, so naturally, he could use the skill on it to learn about its properties.

The fact that Casper and Priscilla praised it so much made him even more interested. He didn't think they lied to him about the Root, but confirming using his own skills was always advised. Besides, no matter what, he would learn about the Root and the curse energies within by having it absorbed.

As for how it tasted? Eh, pretty neutral.

With all of that done, he dispelled his barrier again, getting a few more stares, with only Roman yelling at him. "Yo, the fuck ya doing?"

"Put the sun in a box and ate the Root of a cursed tree able to destroy worlds," Jake answered.

"Fair enough!" Roman yelled with a shrug and a laugh.

Jake chuckled a bit himself as he closed his eyes for a moment, just relaxing as the minutes ticked by and people returned to the booth. Jake greeted them as Sultan and Miranda came over.

"Now it's time for the true action to begin," Sultan said. "I predict this phase will be far more extreme than the others, and it will no longer be individuals but entire factions investing in items. However... I have a good feeling equipment won't be as bad as it could be. Many factions are unwilling to invest substantial funds in a piece of equipment that could be lost permanently should the user die in a place where it cannot be retrieved like in a dungeon, and quite frankly, the additional power offered compared to epic gear will likely not be worth the investment."

"Except for people like me," Jake concluded.

"Precisely. Based on my estimates, you will compete with around a hundred people total on the planet willing to invest so much wealth in temporary equipment. Of them, it is doubtful how many will even require the same things you do. As for the auxiliary items... that will be a whole other deal. Those are items factions as a whole can use," Sultan explained.

"Well then," Jake said as the intermission came to an end. "Let's hopefully spend some money!"

System Announcement:

The third phase of the Auction has now begun, where all ancient rarity items will be sold off. All items will be listed with a set minimum bidding price by the seller, as well as a potential buyout price, allowing anyone to instantly buy the item.

There are a total of 413 listings of ancient items for sale during this third phase of the Auction. These items will be posted one at a time in thirty-second intervals.

Once all items have been posted, there will be a period of one hour before all bidding ends. Items will be posted in order of minimum bids and buyout price. Any item not bought at the end of this phase will be returned to the original seller.

The first item will be posted in two minutes.

Quick math, a bit over three and a half hours, four and a half with the extra bidding time, same deal as before. Jake had his wallet at the ready, everyone was in position, bird on his head, and the bidding began.

[Helmet of-]

Fuck you system, Jake thought as the first item appeared. A shitty plate helmet that also looked stupid. Who puts horns on helmets, to begin with? That just sounds impractical as hell and a great place to grab during a battle, not to mention how it could easily get stuck on stuff while moving.

Sadly, he felt like he had to watch it just to see the price develop. He saw that the bidding price started at one Credit, making it clear the guy who posted it wanted to game the system as the lower-priced items appeared first. The buyout price was set at forty million.

Jake observed the price as it slowly grew. Shortly, it reached a million, and within not that long, it sat at seven million. From what Jake could see, it looked like only three or four people were bidding with how the price spiked. After twenty seconds, the bidding died down, as clearly no one was in too much of a rush. Thirty seconds in, the second item appeared.

[Yalsten Choker of-]

His disappointment was immeasurable, and his day ruined, as yet another useless item appeared. This one was at least a bit more interesting as it included spatial storage. People always went wild for spatial storage items. Even if many already had it, this one was special because it allowed one to store liquids in some odd way, which usually a spatial storage couldn't without first putting said liquid in containers.

It also gave stats as can only be expected. Despite Jake's less than enthusiastic reception of the choker, there was much interest, and the price quickly climbed far above the helmet. Shortly, its price was in the double-digit millions.

A third item appeared.

Dud.

This continued as Jake kept watch, waiting for something good to appear. Soon, a contender popped up.

[Blade of Ashen Cold (Ancient)] – A blade crafted from the frozen ash of dozens of powerful vampires – the handle made from their bones. Through time, this blade has only grown in power, inadvertently empowered by the environment in Yalsten and the curse. With every slash, release frozen ash to freeze your foes. By infusing the blade with mana, release a blast of ash, hiding your presence and freezing any

nearby foes. As the blade itself is formed of frozen ash, it can split apart and reassemble at will.
Enchantments: Ashen Cold.Requirements: lvl 140+ in any humanoid race.

Jake read it over and had to admit it was tempting. With the preview feature-thing, he saw it looked like a katana with an entirely gray body giving off faint vapor. It also reminded him a bit of his old Shortsword of Icy Winds, though, of course, that sword had been far weaker.

He considered placing a bid as he saw the price climb fast. There was lots of interest, and Jake understood why. Swords were extremely popular, no doubt due to the majority of the Noboru clan using them, and he also had the impression that many just preferred swords over other weapons. The fact that it was a sword with wide usage, perhaps even for more spell-casting-focused classes, also helped the price.

In the end, he skipped it by, not because of the price or what it did, but because it was a sword. He recalled his talk with the Viper and decided to try and only go for shorter weapons like daggers. Also... if he decided to still bid, he had plenty of time. The buyout price for this one was at a hundred and twenty million.

A dozen or so more items slipped by, some of them a bit interesting, especially the auxiliary items, but nothing he specifically wanted. Did he kind of want a painting able to summon phantasmal soldiers that attacked anyone deemed an enemy? Sure. Did he actually think it would be useful to him? No.

Jake just honestly didn't like wasting money. He was fine spending it but not wasting it on things he saw no real use for. Perhaps it was because he had spent years at university studying finance and had the sentiment hammered into him.

However... when something did pop up that he wanted?

[Nightprowler Armor (Ancient)] – Armor created from the hide of a powerful C-tier Nightprowler variant. The hide is incredibly sturdy against physical and magical attacks, especially piercing and slashing blows. Due to the Records left by the Nightprowler, any time you are not under direct sunlight, activate the passive ability Shadow Prowl, increasing all effects of stealth-based abilities as shadows hide you. The armor also slowly repairs while not under direct sunlight. Enchantments: +300 Perception, +250 Agility, +100 Endurance. Shadow Prowl. Shadow Mend. Requirements: lvl 140+ in any humanoid race

It was a simple leather chest armor. Nearly entirely black, and from what Jake could see, the Nightprowler had likely been some cat-like creature. The stats were great, even if he could see himself get too much Agility and go over the cap... but then again, he would need levels to use the armor first. Jake was already calculating how much he would need from levels and if he should invest some free points and drink some elixirs before he had even placed his first bid. Because Jake wasn't going to bid.

The buyout was set at seventy million Credits. The bidding price quickly climbed to thirteen million as Jake just bought it outright, not bothering with any of that bidding shit. He wanted it, and he didn't bother getting into a bidding war.

He knew that the Court of Shadows were no doubt those he had been bidding against, so while one could argue he had fucked over his little brother a bit, Jake felt it was fair. Caleb had once taken Jake's favorite controller to a friend's house without asking first, so he really had no recourse.

With seventy million Credits invested, Jake did not let up as he kept watch. Items kept flying by, Jake ignoring them one by one whenever he saw them start with "staff" or "helmet" or anything like that. So far, he had not seen any bows, which surprised him a bit. Oh, but he did see one very interesting item pop up.

[Railgun of Silver Light (Ancient)] – A railgun firing highly intense beams of Silver Light. Created by the Pure Ones of Yalsten to kill vampires, the weapon is incredibly potent against any vitality-based lifeform,

hampering their healing with every blow as the Silver Light embeds itself in any target hit. Trigger an emergency discharge, releasing an explosion of Silver Light all around you, blinding and slowing down foes. Enchantments: Silver Light. Requirements: lvl 145+ in any humanoid race.

It was exactly as advertised, just a big-ass railgun. It was nearly five meters long, and without superhuman stats, utterly impossible to wield. Jake kind of wanted to buy it just to walk around with a big ass gun, but on the other hand, the item had already climbed to fifteen million Credits, showing he was not the only one with infantile dreams.

Or maybe it was because the weapon was actually useful. That was a potential explanation, but Jake chose to believe it was someone just wanting to look cool bidding.

He kept watching as items flew by. Jake nearly had a mini heart attack when another leather armor showed up, and he nearly didn't want to identify it in case of buyer's remorse. However, once he built up the courage, he saw it provided Vitality and Toughness and had the ability to summon a barrier of mana around the user when infused. Was it good? Yes. Did it not give Perception, thus making it objectively a worse product? Also yes.

Riding high on that kind of emotion you get when you buy something or get a gift, and then afterward look up reviews online, confirming it was a good purchase, Jake already felt good about himself as the very next item appeared.

Jake read the first word and was dismissive, but the second one caught his eyes.

[Bloodfeast Dagger (Ancient)] – A dagger created from the bones of slain enemies of Yalsten, all melded together to create a ceremonial dagger typically only used during the Bloodfeast, a sacred tradition among vampires. Once Yalsten fell, the dagger was left in the pool of the last Bloodfeast, forgotten. The dagger is extremely sharp, and any cut made with it will bleed far more than before. Blood spilled using

this dagger will have its properties improved. Enchantments: BloodfeastRequirements: lvl 140+ in any humanoid race.

A god damn dagger. No, more than just a damn dagger, a god damn bone dagger. When he read it, it reminded him of his very first enchanted melee weapon, the uncommon rarity sacrificial ritual dagger from the Challenge Dungeon. This one even had an enchantment a bit like the Bloodletting one. But even better. He saw many possibilities and how it made the blood more potent.

He had a suspicion that the weapon was technically not necessarily meant to be a weapon, but he was sure going to use it as one. Shit, even if it proved to not be a good weapon, he could just use it for the Bloodfeast ability with his Blood of the Malefic Viper.

Jake was excited and saw the price only slowly climb, meaning there was little interest. It went to four million rather swiftly still but did not jump as something like the chest armor had. He instantly went to buyout but saw the price and stopped.

Buyout price: 1,000,000,000 Credits

He double-checked, making sure there were not a few zeroes too many. But no, it was correct. The cheeky motherfucker who had put it up for sale had set the buyout price at one billion, making Jake curse under his breath as he placed a bid of five million.

I swear to god, if a bow pops up with a ridiculous buyout price, I may have to slap someone, Jake thought as the next item appeared.

And it was a bow.

Chapter 366 - Bees, Pants & The Geopolitical Landscape

Jake had been waiting for a bow, so he was happy when he saw a bow. What he was not happy with was this particular bow.

[Bow of the Lightseeker (Ancient)] – Created from a highly bendable metal and a string from the hair of a powerful C-grade Hilsic vampire. Purified and empowered by the crafters among the Pure Ones, the bow has been created as a weapon to slay vampires. The bow passively absorbs light-affinity mana from the surroundings and amplifies it within. Every arrow released using this bow will be blessed by the light. Allows the user to supercharge the light absorption or the light release feature, either creating a domain of perfect darkness or a beam of highly concentrated light mana. Enchantments: Lightseeker. Requirements: lvl 135+ in any humanoid race.

On paper, it actually looked fine and dandy. Made arrows better with some light magic, able to fire big beams and all of that great stuff. There was just one tiny little issue... Jake didn't have the affinity to use it. He and light energy of any kind just didn't get along, and without even buying the bow, he knew it wasn't something he could use as-is.

Which, of course, left transmutation as an option. The thing is, Jake wasn't confident he even knew how to properly transmute it. He had no experience with the light affinity besides getting burned by it, and there weren't any clear and easy ways to do it.

His old bow was easily transmuted due to the two gems holding all the energy and functioning as catalysts, so all he had to do was transform those, and it worked. But with this one, he saw nothing obvious to do, and he had a strong feeling he had a way higher chance of just breaking it or making it worse than creating a new great bow.

The price was also climbing relatively fast. Jake could see the Holy Church want it, considering their obsession with light magic, and probably others too, as Jake knew the light affinity was a very normal one for humans to possess.

Jake ultimately decided to not bid on it, as he, deep in his heart, hoped another one would appear.

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Another bow did not appear. Out of four hundred fucking items, there was only one lousy bow. No, Jake did not count the damn crossbow because crossbows aren't real bows. To say Jake was annoyed would be an understatement, but luckily enough, he at least found some useful things during these last few hours.

By now, every item had been posted, and the first item Jake was actively monitoring and betting on was the dagger. It had reached eleven million Credits, with Jake sitting on the top bid. He was pretty sure that one was locked in. He had discovered that there was an anti-snipe rule, giving the one currently holding the bid a five-second window if someone else placed on where they could counter, without triggering the same five-second window for the other party.

This meant that the item was his as long as Jake had the top bid at least five seconds before the auction ended. Others could place a bit, but as long as he outbid that, he got it.

Now, the dagger was good, and he also got the armor he bought outright, but there were still three other items in his sight. As Sultan would naturally not bid for him on items this expensive – as agreed upon – this included some alchemy-related stuff. The first of which was particularly interesting.

[Sealed Pollendust Bee Container (Ancient)] – A tool specially developed by the alchemists to have bees cultivate the soil and herbs to make it more favorable for their alchemy. This device holds a single D-grade Pollendust Bee Queen Egg within its spatially expanded interior and can serve as a home once

hatched. Pollendust Bees are creatures able to passively absorb and consume mana and infuse it into the soil around them as well as other herbs. They also passively give off pollen to cultivate plants. The device will continue to serve as a home for the Pollendust Bees even after hatching, as they never stray far from the Queen.

This one was fascinating as he read some attached notes and saw the item itself. It looked like a three meters tall boulder with many holes drilled into it, but the notes explained how the inside was quite a bit larger. The sale also came with tomes found with the item, detailing more stuff.

However, what really made Jake interested was the knowledge he meditated to get using Sagacity of the Malefic Viper. Pollendust Bees were incredibly valuable tools when cultivating a good garden, but they could only reach D-grade naturally without help due to the difficulty of having the Queen grow – the individual bees unable to even level themselves. But Jake knew methods to help the Queen and believed many did not know the true value of the insect within the container. At least he didn't think so, based on the meager ten million top bid currently on it, held by him.

Also... while a Pollendust Bee Queen was primarily focused on creating bees, they were in no way harmless. Especially if Jake managed to help the Queen evolve, which he sure planned on.

Another item he had his eyes on was some leg armor. As he had considered bidding, he had, of course, looked at his current ones.

[Legguards of the Undergrowth (Epic)] - As the first to wander the Undergrowth, the Records of the long-forgotten place has led to the creation of these legguards, so you can keep a piece of the Undergrowth with you as your path continues. An Immense amount of life-affinity mana has found its way into these pants, and simply wearing them will fill you with vital energy and energy to help you on your travels. The legguards will passively absorb and store life-affinity mana in the atmosphere. This mana can instantly be released as a burst of healing if the wearer is a vitality-based lifeform. Passively emits an aura that encourages growth. Enchantments: + 150 Vitality, +50 Agility, +50 Endurance. Self-Repair. Life Burst. Aura of the Undergrowth. Requirements: lvl 115+ in any humanoid race

Jake had appreciated the legguards, and the Life Burst enchantment had come in handy quite a few times. However, he didn't use the Aura of the Undergrowth part much, and the stats were also becoming subpar. Especially compared to what the auction had to offer.

[Trousers of Second Wind (Ancient)] – A pair of trousers created for a noble son of a King of Blood once upon a time to keep his child alive. The trousers themselves are made of powerful leather of an unknown origin but are incredibly resilient to all kinds of attacks. The enchantments placed upon them only serve to protect the wearer. In a time of emergency, the trousers can trigger a Second Wind, infusing the body with extremely active vital energy to heal wounds. If damaged, the trousers can self-repair by absorbing blood. Enchantments: Toughness + 300, Vitality +300. Second Wind. Blood Absorption. Requirements: lvl 145+ in any humanoid race

They were simple pants for a simple hunter. The upgrade was not as massive as his chest armor had been, so he did not outright buy out the pants for one hundred and fifty million Credits but instead just held the current top bid of thirty-five million.

He wanted them, but not at all cost. They were basically just his old pants but better. The only annoyance was that he wouldn't be able to use them for a good while due to the 145 level requirement.

The fourth and final item Jake kept an eye on was one even more interesting than the others.

[Meditation Pad (Ancient)] – An old meditation pad of unknown origin. Improves the effect of any Meditation skill when used.

It was just a damn pillow, yet Jake could not help but be attracted to it. Improving his meditation skill would be great, and he also kind of just wanted to know more about it. The problem was the cost. The current top bid was not held by Jake but sat at sixty-two million Credits. The buyout price was ten billion, which was just a nice way of saying there wasn't any buyout price.

With only ten minutes left, Jake kept watch like a hawk. He held the top bids on the pants, dagger, and bug container but ultimately decided to place a bid of sixty-three million on the meditation pad too. The price jumped to sixty-six within a second, and Jake did not hesitate as he bid seventy. Only to see himself countered with seventy-five.

Jake kept bidding and saw it jump several times, and as he hesitated, he saw others had also joined in. When it reached a hundred and thirty million, Jake pulled out as he really didn't think it worth it. He didn't meditate much anyway, and someone else clearly wanted it far more than he did. Also, it didn't give him that good of a gut feeling. Not like the bug container.

In the end, Jake got everything he wanted. Of course, the prices jumped a bit towards the end, so Jake ended up spending over a hundred and fifty million on this ancient item auction, but he still felt a wave of relief as the system message came.

System Announcement-

It marked another intermission, and Jake breathed out as he felt the items be deposited into his spatial storage. During the auction, Jake had discovered one could not see their own items, which included what Sultan sold for him, so he hadn't been able to follow the price development.

Which is why it felt a bit weird when he checked his Credit balance after just spending so much.

Credits Available: 1,645,177,123

It turns out Jake had sold Ancient rarity items for well over a billion Credits.

"Sultan, what the fuck happened!?" he yelled across the booth, making everyone turn to them.

"You sold a lot of things," Sultan answered back with a big smile. "We sold a lot of things. The coffins and altars both brought in quite the profit, but the big winner was the staff."

"What staff?" Jake asked.

"The one that could summon Blood Beasts," Sultan answered, a bit confused.

"I had that?"

"Yes...?" Sultan said, looking perplexed, to say the least.

"Huh," Jake recognized. Well, in his defense, he did have an ironclad policy of not giving a shit about stupid magic staves. "What exactly did it do?"

“... if you stored the blood of killed beasts, it could summon a Blood Beast of them,” Sultan explained, as he seemed to have caught on.

“Neat, I guess?” Jake shrugged.

“It is an absolutely invaluable training tool for large factions. It allows them to capture different species and have individuals fight them to learn their attack patterns and what to watch out for, thus lessening the risk once they fight the real thing,” Sultan kept explaining.

“Still sounds useless,” Jake insisted. Make it less risky? Sounds like he dodged a bullet by getting rid of that one. It would save a lot of people from boring fights and allow them to experience more fun surprises.

Anyway, Jake was now even richer than before and more than ready for the legendary auction. But first, he would have to pass the intermission, and to be honest, he had no one he wanted to go see in particular. Sylphie did as she took off to see Carmen again, and Jake decided to just stay as he took out one of the books that came with the bees as he began reading that in-depth as he waited.

There better be a legendary bow, Jake semi-threatened the system itself as he impatiently read his book.

Jacob sat in the booth used by the Holy Church. He could not call it his, as the one who had earned it was Bertram, with another one also earned by Maria. Maria, however, had chosen to simply stay with them as she did not have any reason to use her own.

The Augur was fully aware that Maria had no loyalty to him or the Holy Church but was merely a mercenary hired to give them a chance to stand side by side with the most powerful individuals on Earth. At least it was meant to do that. But the Treasure Hunt had been a disaster in many ways, and even if they managed to get all valuables out before the Monarch forced them to leave, it was still a terrible outcome.

Jake was one thing, but the Sword Saint had also proven to be far more than he could have ever predicted. He had already been informed of what exactly the old man was, and it made a few things click into place. A transcendence did not appear out of nowhere, and the fact that he was walking the steps to create one was a potential explanation to his near-immunity to divination.

Shaking his head, he returned his attention to the matter at hand.

“How many Credits did we expend during this phase?” Jacob asked the trade manager.

“A bit north of four billion Credits,” the man answered, Jacob nodding acknowledgment. It was a lot, far more than any individual could ever conjure up, but the Holy Church was a collective. It came from the coffers of the Church itself, a collection of wealth from dozens of millions of humans from their many cities. By now, the Holy Church had more than twenty Pylon cities of varying sizes under their banner and far more smaller settlements without Pylons.

In fact, on Earth, the vast majority of humanity still lived outside of cities with Pylons. For many, it was simply due to the isolation of where they appeared after the Tutorial, but for others, it was a conscious choice. Jacob had to admit that while Sanctdomo was a safe city, the same could not be said for all those with Pylons. A Pylon offered benefits but also demerits, primarily due to its attraction of beasts.

Meanwhile, a small town or city without a Pylon was most often safer than another small one with a Pylon. Beasts were not all mindless monsters, and even those that were instinctually didn't just kill

people. There was simply no reason to kill those weaker than yourself for beasts – unless there was a Pylon to claim, of course.

“How much did we manage to sell for?” Jacob also asked.

“... only two-point-seven,” the trade manager answered. It was a massive loss for the Church. Credits themselves were rather hard to get, and there had actually been deflation according to their calculations due to so many buying from the System Store. While people did also sell directly to it, far more bought, and coupled with the general hoarding of wealth, the value of each Credit seemed to be increasing. Merchants did have methods to conjure up more Credits from some of their skills, but far from enough to offset it either.

It also had to be noted that while the Church did charge high taxes to collect their wealth, Jacob had quickly come to learn that the *modus operandi* of the Holy Church would not be easily implemented on Earth. The culture would need time to change, and the full switch to a complete collective could not be instantly implemented.

Usually, the concept of ownership did not exist for members of the Holy Church. The Church was a collective, like one large life form. If it was deemed better for the collective, the valuables would be redistributed. You did not even own your own life and power. However, this would not fly on Earth quite yet. The culture of their planet had been too rooted in the concept of ownership, property, and individualism, making it a hard transition.

But one that would eventually come. After all, this collective was a massive source of strength for the Church.

“How much do we have for the Legendary auction?” Jacob finally asked.

“It is inadvisable for us to spend more than five billion,” the man answered. “This is already with loans from independent cities, mercenaries, and merchants.”

Jacob nodded gravely. It was good that at least the independent cities wanted to trade with them, as they were often very antagonistic. While they were not that powerful individually, they did represent the majority of humanity. By rough estimation, Jacob believed around half of humanity had died off since the system had arrived. The introduction back to their planet had not been smooth, and many had found themselves in unfortunate areas or simply died due to fighting. Out of the remaining four or so billion humans, eighty percent likely lived outside the sphere of major factions.

At least they did so for now. Every day more were forced to join the larger factions, and while some did not actively expand – such as the Court - Valhal and the Noboru clan were both on the offensive. The same was true for the undead to a lesser extent.

Jacob was deadset on having the Church come out on top, but for that, they needed to recruit more standout talents.

Or even better.

For those currently on Earth to leave.

Chapter 367 - The Legendaries Cometh

Jake alternated between meditating and diving into knowledge from Sagacity of the Malefic Viper and reading the book on the Pollendust Bees. He found the knowledge in the books severely lacking compared to Sagacity, and in some places, just wrong.

First of all, it explained how to awaken the egg and birth the Pollendust Bee Queen, and the method was just horrible. Insects differed from many other races because they didn't really have a natural growth period as, for example, humans had. Instead, the Queen would be born at level 100 and hold the power of a D-grade from the moment it hatched.

According to the book, one just had to infuse enough mana into the container to awaken the Queen as all the necessary materials to do so were already included. While that was technically true, it was also a shit method. Why the hell would Jake just be happy with a normal Pollendust Bee Queen? No, he would do a nice and big ritual first. It would be a bit like what he did with Sylphie, though he seriously doubted he could repeat what happened then.

Throughout his studying, people had come and gone, and by now, the booth was full again as it was soon time for the legendary Auction to begin.

Sultan and Miranda had both come over to him as they chose to stay near. The reason was simple enough... so they had sources to borrow from. If an item popped up and Jake couldn't afford it, he sure as hell was going to nicely "ask" Sultan for a loan. Though he kind of knew it was more for Miranda to borrow from them in case something Haven needed popped up without her having enough funds. Haven – as a city – was honestly kind of poor. Miranda charged extremely low taxes and spent most of what little they did earn on paying people. Apparently, the primary source of income was Sultan, due to Miranda imposing some extra charges on the man, based on the agreement for him to stay and operate out of Haven.

"Anything you two are looking for?" Miranda asked. "With us keeping the Supreme Illusary Defense Array Disc for Haven, the only thing we really needed has been found. But I will naturally keep an eye out."

"Many items auctioned off may be something that can bring a way bigger return in the future once Earth matures a bit, so I am searching for that," Sultan answered.

"Bow," Jake stated. He just wanted a damn bow, okay?

And as the timer reached zero and the intermission ended, he would hopefully finally have a chance to.

System Announcement:

The fourth phase of the Auction has now begun, where all legendary rarity items will be sold off. All items will be listed with a set minimum bidding price by the seller, as well as a potential buyout price, allowing anyone to instantly buy the item.

There are a total of 109 listings of legendary items for sale during this fourth phase of the Auction. These items will be posted one at a time in two-minute intervals. Note that for the remainder of the Auction, all bidding will be visible to all event participants.

All items will be auctioned off immediately once active bidding ends. If any item does not receive any new bid for at least ten seconds, it will be sold to the highest bidder. This phase will at most last until one hour has passed from the final listing being posted. Any item not bought at the end of this phase will be returned to the original seller.

The first item will be posted in two minutes.

Jake read the rules and saw that for the first time, there were changes. First of all, the bidding was now far more active, and it wasn't all about sitting on an item for hours on end trying to keep the top offer, but now one had to actively bid. It was far more like a regular auction.

The anonymity was also gone, so now Jake knew who to go beat the living shit out of if they dared fight him on any bow. Actually, this part was probably the most impactful when seen from a political point of view. Even Jake could instantly see that.

"This changes things," Sultan said as he took out his book, and he saw Miranda also take out what looked like a recording device. "Seeing what factions buy can give insight into their current states and what they need, but perhaps more importantly, it will allow us to subtly spot who are allies based on if they bid against each other."

"Does that mean anyone not bidding against me is an ally?" Jake asked sarcastically, finding the sentiment a bit silly. It was just as likely that the reason they didn't bid was just that they couldn't afford to or didn't need it.

"You misunderstand... it is to spot those who do bid against each other. I believe many will use this as a tool to sow belief they are not allies by visibly displaying conflict through bids, while in actuality, it is quite the opposite. Naturally, this will not fool the more insightful ones, but many here are not politically minded, so it will help sway the perception of the masses," Sultan explained, Miranda nodding along as if what he said made perfect sense.

Jake kind of saw the logic. Be an independent faction and bid against the Holy Church? You have just shown all the D-grades aligned with you that you truly are independent and dare stand up to the big bad Church, while in actuality, it is all just a show while working with the Church behind the scenes.

A bit like how politicians will talk about helping the lower class while receiving bribes from lobbyists to make life worse for them. AKA, shady shit Jake didn't want to take part in or waste brainpower thinking about.

What he would instead focus on was getting the items he wanted. Then Miranda could deal with the annoying stuff as always.

Oh, but he would still mentally note those who bid against him. You know, for future reference.

Jake was ready as the first legendary item appeared... and it was kind of a spicy one right off the bat.

[Statue of Heroic Might (Legendary)] – A statue created from valuable stone by an A-grade sculptor to display the true might of his race. Gazing upon the statue will grant you Heroic Might, temporarily making you less fearful and reducing the effect of certain negative mental afflictions. Touching the statue will permanently increase Strength by 100 as you embrace the heroic power within. Any activation of the statue drains its energy. Once all energy is used, the statue will need to be reinfused or lose all effects.

Now, Jake's gut reaction was to bid ten million as, quite frankly, the statue looked awesome. It reminded him of those overly buff 80's action heroes, and the guy was wielding two massive axes hoisted over his shoulders to boot, looking like a certified badass. However, when he was instantly outbid, and the price went to twenty million and then instantly jumped to fifty, he stopped.

The actual statue was... not worth it. At least not to Jake. The Heroic Might effect looked great, and Jake could see it be useful, but not for someone like him. In fact, it probably would not even work with his Pride according to how he knew skills tended to work.

As for the permanent Strength? Well, that was also great... except it went into the same category as consuming elixirs. The 10 Willpower he got back in the Challenge Dungeon did, too, after all. So, what was the purpose of the statue, and what made it legendary?

It was how many could use it. And when Jake saw the top bidders, it also made sense.

One party was Sven from Valhal, and the other was someone Jake was told was the trade manager of Sanctdomo. Two others also showed great interest, and according to Miranda, both of those were independents.

The Court of Shadows did not bid, and the Risen also dropped out early. Yet, the item still went to over three hundred million before the bidding really began to slow down. In the end, the statue was sold for three hundred and eighty-nine million Credits, and just in time as the two minutes had passed and the next item appeared.

[Orrery of the Godless One (Legendary)] – An orrery made by a man who refused to acknowledge any gods during his life but only viewed the celestial concept as worthy of being recognized as divine. This orrery will passively map out all nearby celestial objects and give insight into their basic properties. This effect is entirely passive and cannot be altered by outside means, and may take a significant amount of time. This effect bypasses all attempts to hide or mask these celestial objects done by anything below divine-level skills.

“Hey, that’s mine!” Jake exclaimed without thinking much, getting the attention of everyone in the booth. He had to admit, he was kind of excited to see others bid on it and how much it would go for.

“Damn, ya got some good stuff. Selling that cube thing?” Roman asked as he walked over. His move seemed to be a catalyst as everyone in the booth began to gather around Jake, Sultan, and Miranda.

“Nah, Haven keeps that,” Jake answered as the others took seats around him. He kind of understood why... he doubted anyone else could afford to buy anything. Well, besides Arnold, who Jake saw summon that giant Railgun of Silver Light from before, and now sat in a corner playing with it.

“Bets on how much it will go for?” Roman then asked.

Sultan looked at the man as he smiled. “Sure. A million Credits?”

“Mate, that’s like my entire net worth. I’ve been spending!” the man said with a laugh. “But sure! Closest wins!”

The price was already climbing and had reached twenty million as Roman made his guess. “I think It’ll go for two hundred million!”

Sultan, on the other hand, smiled. “Well, then I guess two hundred and one million.”

“Yo, that’s just damn slimy!” Roman yelled.

“Two hundred and two,” Felicia suddenly spoke up, getting a nasty look from Sultan. She just shrugged in response. “You didn’t say others couldn’t participate.”

Jake ignored the squabbles of the poor as he saw his potential earnings climb more than ten million at a time. Soon, the price reached a hundred million. Then a hundred and fifty. Jake also saw who was

bidding, and to his surprise, it was borderline every single large faction. The Holy Church, Risen, Valhal, Court of Shadows, and quite a few smaller factions too.

The many bidders made him think the price would go insane, but it slowed down when it hit a hundred and ninety. Yet two were still bidding – the Risen and the Church – as the price climbed above two hundred million. Sultan groaned a bit as Felicia won the bet, and Jake was all-smiles as it reached two hundred and forty million before no one else was bidding. In the end, the Risen bought it.

This was when Jake learned something else caused by the items getting auctioned off like this... he got his money instantly. Two hundred and forty million Credits – minus one for Sultan – appeared in his inventory to Jake's delight.

"Pretty good," Sultan said as he paid Felicia without saying anything more. "A bit over what I expected, actually."

To the background noise of Roman trying to argue he shouldn't pay Felicia and the wonders of shared finances, the third item appeared.

[Staff of-]

Jake wanted to curse but held himself back. It was a fucking staff made for blood magic and manipulation of life. Jake did see it as rather interesting, and it looked very suitable for a healer to use. So it also made sense when the eventual winner turned out to be Eron, who happily spent a hundred and seventy million on it. He didn't know that the guy even used staves, and chances are the lunatic just wanted to experiment.

The next few items weren't interesting either. Well, okay, they were interesting, all legendary items tended to be, but they were not anything Jake wanted. Eight items in, the first piece of wearable equipment appeared.

[Cuirass of the Immortal (Legendary)] – Rings of blessed metal link together to form armor that can block nearly any blow. Created by a master armorsmith by pouring in his own life, he created his magnum opus as he died, fulfilling his dream of creating armor to make its wearer immortal. Should the wearer ever face death, the cuirass shall show its true worth. Allows the wearer to survive even if health falls below zero, instead fully refreshing the wearer, filling all resource pools, and removing any afflictions and negative effects, returning the wearer to their prime. This can only occur once, and the cuirass shall join its creator and turn to dust afterward. Enchantments: Immortal Requirements: Soulbound.

Jake stared at it a bit, and while he thought it looked awesome, he wasn't sure he thought it worthy of the legendary rarity. It was just an automatic super health potion or something like that. However, the reactions of the people around him were entirely different.

"This should be the most expensive one yet," Sultan said.

"Very likely," Miranda agreed. "It is hard to put a price on such an item."

The others also nodded, and Jake had to admit... they were right. The second it appeared, Jake saw it jump to a hundred million, then two hundred million, and soon it was above half a billion Credits. Looking at the situation a bit logically, Jake could see how powerful it was based on how it could even remove negative effects, which likely even included periods of weakness after using a boosting skill. The fact that the top bidder at half a billion was Carmen only reinforced this.

“Didn’t know Carmen was that rich,” Jake commented. As far as he knew, she did not like to borrow from her faction, so he wondered if she had just struck it rich in prior phases or any of the legendaries sold earlier were hers.

“If you have items up for sale that are yet unsold, you can use those as guarantees. If you are still lacking in funds at the end of the event, the second highest will get a chance to accept it at that price. If no one does, the original buyer can keep it but get a negative Credit balance. Of course, the system has limits on this, but I believe she should have at least two legendary items up for sale and isn’t poor, to begin with,” Sultan explained.

“How have I not heard of this?” Jake asked. Was the system that shit at explaining rules?

“You would know if you tried to bid over what you had,” Sultan answered. “I did it as a test in the very first round to discover this, and as long as you show the intent to buy an item but is unable to afford it, the system will inform you.”

“Kind of makes sense?” Jake said, shaking his head as he just returned his attention to the cuirass. In the end, it went for six hundred and two million Credits, which quite frankly was insane. Jake thought, having nearly two billion himself. Carmen ended up being the final buyer, Jake seeing how it made sense for her. She was a real beast with all her boosting skills, and if she could do that twice? That would be quite something.

Jake had found it a bit funny that Eron also bid on it, considering he could repeatedly revive himself anyway, but it was probably just for research purposes. Either way, Jake was ready for the next item as he suddenly thought of something.

“You did research on upcoming items, right?” Jake asked Sultan.

"I did," the man confirmed.

"So... is there a bow?" Jake asked with hope in this voice.

"Without being aware of everything there will appear, I do believe I have heard there is a crossb--"

Jake nearly broke the rule of no violence during the Auction at that very moment.

Chapter 368 - Scammed

Jake remembered the very first day he had been introduced to the system. He remembered his class selection, where he was represented with a number of choices for a starting class. Six choices, to be exact. Of those six, one was the archer class.

So, if one of six starting classes was archer... then why the fuck wasn't there any god damn bows for sale? There were over a hundred damn legendary items, so why not a bow!?

To rub salt in the wound, there actually was a fucking crossbow. Jake refused to even look at the description when it popped up as he seethed by himself. He didn't even want to justify why he couldn't use one due to how his skills worked or anything like that because it honestly didn't matter. Jake just didn't want to use a damn crossbow.

He would rather just throw his arrows than embarrass them by putting them in a crossbow. Roman pointing out the crossbow could automatically conjure bolts did not help that sentiment, as the man ruthlessly teased Jake and only shut up when Jake threatened to steal his staff and use that as an arrow.

But... one must also look at the positives because Jake did see some peculiar items. One of which came just after the cuirass had been sold off.

[Blood Spear Replica (Legendary)] – This spear is a replica of the legendary Blood Spear used by Sanguine himself while he still lived. The spear's body is made of unknown wood, while the tip of speartip is created from the crystallized blood of a slain A-grade vampire. Any attack made using the Blood Spear directly damages vital energy, and if a foe is slain with the Blood Spear, they will resurrect as thralls of the user. Despite being a mere replica, it still holds a morsel of the Records of the true Blood Spear, making it indestructible for all who do not wield the power of a god. Enchantments: Blood Spear Requirements: Soulbound

Now, it did not need to be said that Jake had no interest in actually buying it, but that did not make its existence any less interesting. This was the first time Jake learned that Sanguine had used a spear when he was alive, and also his first time seeing a replica of a weapon used by a god. The concept that one could borrow Records from a far more potent tool opened up quite a few possibilities.

Others clearly thought this too, as the spear was bought for three hundred and twenty million Credits. The one who bought it was someone Jake had never even heard of and was, according to Miranda, the leader of a small group of settlements quite a bit away from any of the major factions.

Naturally, Jake also sold off some things during this time. The Sword Saint bought the Paint Brush of Ephemeral Power for a hundred and thirty-eight million Credits – the least of anything he sold – while the Forgestone of Eternal Embers went for a whopping four hundred and three million. The brush had been a bit of a disappointment, but the Forgestone was a big win and ended up being sold to the Holy Church.

The last of his legendary items was the Supreme Escape Token. Well, technically, it was Sylphie's item, but Jake was acting as her guardian, so legally, it was his. She wasn't even a year old, so she still couldn't have her own bank account, even if Jake came to learn that she did actually have Credits. She just hadn't

gotten any yet and seemed to have little concept of trade, so it was probably for the best Jake handled it. Jake was pretty confident she would have sold a legendary item for a bag of tasty snacks if possible.

He had to admit, he did not expect much of the Token. It was just a coward's tool to escape from a bad situation, and even if the mechanic to teleport to an anchor was cool, the limited uses made it not that useful, in Jake's opinion.

So when the Token ended up being the most valuable item he sold during the entire Auction, he felt a bit miffed. Not that he complained when he got an insane nine hundred million and sixty-seven Credits straight from the Holy Church's coffers. Based on Sultan's comments, he was certain the Token would go to the Augur himself to keep him safe. Jake didn't really care; he wouldn't tell others how to spend their money even if he thought it was a stupidly high amount to spend.

Anyway, with the Token, Sylphie turned out to be a real winner when it came to finding expensive stuff! Which is a good segue into what Jake did buy. Because it was for the little ball of feathers.

[Omniweave Armor (Legendary)] – Armor created with an extremely rare and highly adaptable type of cloth that can take the shape of nearly any piece of clothing. This was originally created as an experimental attempt to allow tamed monsters of an A-grade King of Blood to wear armor but ultimately failed due to the lack of material. This prototype, while powerful, can only fit on a creature with a small form. As the armor was made to be all-purpose, it includes internal spatial storage as well as powerful environmental adaption features. Enchantments: Omniweave Adaption. Spatial Storage. Requirements: Soulbound

Jake had seen it and gotten an idea. He had heard Sultan talk about how it could create a great pair of bracers, or maybe even a scarf or something from it. Others also seemed to be lacking ideas as the price only went to around thirty million – likely just to get the materials it was made from – which is when Jake swept in with his genius idea.

And genius it was. Jake would dare anyone to disagree upon seeing the majesty that was the current Sylphie.

Because she now stood on top of his head, proudly wearing a small vest!

Jake had barely believed it possible when he had given it to her, and with the excitement and egging on from both Miranda, Felicia, Eleanor, and Christen, Sylphie had finally made her little swagger vest.

Jake had ended up buying it for fifty-two million Credits, and it was no doubt the greatest purchase of the entire Auction event so far. Even if Jake didn't get anything more, he could walk away proud.

At the current time, there were only a total of two items left of this phase, and when the second-to-last appeared, Jake groaned as it was a damn sword. Naturally, the price jumped, people went wild, and it was sold for a high price.

All of this is to say that Jake had not gotten anything outside of buying the greatest piece of clothing ever seen with mortal eyes.

"Is it just me, or was this entire legendary auction not as good as expected?" Jake asked those around him. "I had hoped for some catalysts, or maybe a legendary tree or something like that. At least one good alchemy ingredient would have made me happy. Oh, or like one of those items to upgrade another item... that would have been awesome."

Sultan shook his head in response. "The issue with those items is that everyone can use them, and even if there is no need for them here and now, many would probably prefer to save them for the future.

Same as how you did not sell the Nalkar heart or the Carbonic Focusing Catalyst. In some ways... one can say they are too valuable to sell.”

Jake couldn't disagree with his words, but that didn't make it sting any less. He also had a suspicion that much of this Auction was just people trading wealth as they could only afford to buy anything due to they themselves selling off another legendary.

He had already given up hope when the last item appeared. Jake instantly saw it was not a bow and prepared to move on... until he noticed what it actually was.

Now... now he really wanted to punch someone in the teeth.

[Quiver of Perrinality (Legendary)] – A quiver created from the leather of a powerful B-grade beast with the ability to create minor subdimensions within its skin where it stores different natural treasures to use as weapons. Made into a quiver, it now retains those same effects. Allows the wearer to infuse mana into the quiver to conjure arrows. Allows the wearer to store conjured creations classified as arrows within the quiver without experiencing any energy decay for an extended period of time. The inside of the quiver is spatially expanded, allowing the wearer to store arrows of varying sizes. The wearer will have innate control of the inside of the quiver when bound. Enchantments: Perrinial Quiver. Requirements: lvl 135+ in any humanoid race.

Jake did not know if he should be happy or sad as the final item appeared. It was made even worse when he saw the minimum bidding price was set at three hundred million fucking Credits. To make matters worse, he had no bloody clue who the seller was, even if there was a name attached.

“Who is that fucker who set the minimum bidding price to three hundred million?” Jake asked Sultan and Miranda.

Miranda stayed quiet as she frowned, and even Sultan shook his head. "Never heard it before."

"Well, whoever he is, fuck him," Jake said as he placed a bid of three hundred million. Because, of course, he would.

Would he have preferred a bow? One hundred thousand percent, but he also had to admit he kind of, sort of, needed a new quiver. He was still using the uncommon quiver all the way back from the tutorial, and while he had long moved on from the arrows it conjured, he still used it to store summoned arcane arrows. Mainly poisoned ones.

This new quiver looked like it could do the same, just better. However, Jake also saw some more potential from the description, especially concerning his Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter. Even if he couldn't do what he planned on doing, the quiver should serve well just as a normal quiver to store pre-prepared poisoned arrows.

After he placed the bid... ten seconds just passed, and he got it. No one else had even tried to contest him, and Jake didn't even think for a second it was because they were being nice. Who the hell even needed it besides him? Maria maybe? Well, okay, a lot could use it, but who would be able to spend hundreds of millions on it...

Besides a sucker like him, who had just gotten fucking scammed.

Jake instantly received the quiver and immediately bound it to himself and put it on his back. Next-up he summoned an arrow and cut his own hand on it, activating Blood of the Malefic Viper. Once it was coated in poison, he put it into the quiver and felt it sink into it like the top was a black hole.

Once it was fully inserted, he felt it within. He even felt that while the poison was decaying in potency, it was significantly slower than in the outside world. It was to the level where he could probably poison an arrow and store it for up to a day without a noticeable decay in poison potency. Waving his hand just vaguely above the quiver, the same arrow appeared. Better than the old quiver for sure, Jake thought.

Next, he tossed a bottle into the quiver but found it just bounced off the top like it hit an invisible barrier. Only arrows I see, Jake thought, as the system popped up again.

System Announcement:

The second part of the fourth phase of the Auction will soon begin, where all unique rarity items will be sold off. All items will be listed with a set minimum bidding price by the seller, as well as a potential buyout price, allowing anyone to instantly buy the item.

These items will be posted one at a time in five-minute intervals.

All items will be auctioned off immediately once active bidding ends. If any item does not receive any new bid for at least ten seconds, it will be sold to the highest bidder.

The first item will be posted in five minutes.

The damn system interrupted his experimenting, and quickly skimming it, he saw there wasn't an intermission. The entire legendary auction had taken less than three and a half hours due to them not

needing the extra hour as all items got sold within a few minutes of posting, and now it was time for the second part to begin.

Jake had begun to wonder when unique items would be sold off... and it turns out it was here towards the end. He did also note that the system did not say how many items there were in total. Besides that, everything seemed to be as usual.

He spoke with the others a bit, but there really wasn't much to say. Sultan had little clue as to how many unique items would appear and only knew of Jake's own Tome. So they all sat in anticipation and discussed as the five minutes swiftly elapsed.

When the first item appeared, Jake learned that he wasn't the only one who had obtained an Akashic Tome during this Treasure Hunt.

[Akashic Tome of the Blood Warden (Unique)] - Allows the user to acquire the class Blood Warden if compatible. Requirements: Lvl 99-199 in any class. Compatible user.

[Storage Orb of the Blood Warden (Epic)] – A storage orb containing items to assist a Blood Warden, including equipment and guidance. This orb is near-indestructible by anyone below B-grade, and any item within will be destroyed if the orb is. Requirements: Blood Warden

It was a bundle of sorts, displaying how one got both items. It also included some other books with information, just like Jake's own Fulgarian Depthcaller Tome. This class was a tank-type one and revolved around blood magic and shields... honestly, it looked a bit basic. Then again, Jake was a bit biased.

One thing was clear, though. Jake's Tome was better. Even Sultan agreed.

"This appears to be a B-tier, maybe only C-tier, Legacy," Sultan commented. "Not the best, but has potential, I guess. The set of equipment is also valuable."

"My storage orb is Ancient," Jake stated.

"Yours is better in every way, yes," Sultan agreed. "But Akashic Tomes are rarely cheap. Let us see how it develops."

And develop it did.

Jake sat shocked as he saw the price climb one bid at a time, and he nearly didn't believe his eyes when the final selling price was reached... at one point two billion Credits.

"How the fuck..." Jake muttered.

"If you ended up with a less than an ideal class at D-grade... this might be your only real way to improve before getting an evolution," Sultan said, shaking his head. "As for the buyer... I do not know of them. Likely simply someone who got lucky with a sale in a prior round to afford it. Or a powerful independent party coming together... it may even be a proxy by a large faction made to buy it as things are no longer anonymous."

Jake nodded, even if he thought it a waste of money. If you got a downright shitty class at D-grade, was it really worth it to try and get a better one and not just push yourself and evolve to C-grade? Or were people just that desperate?

Either way, it looked like these Akashic Tomes had insane value. So when Jake saw the next item was another Tome, he was certain it would rake in cash.

[Akashic Tome of the Blood Wine Brewer (Unique)] - Allows the user to acquire the profession Blood Wine Brewer if compatible. Requirements: Lvl 99-199 in any profession. Compatible user.

[Storage Orb of the Blood Wine Brewer (Epic)] – A storage orb containing items to assist a Blood Wine Brewer, including equipment and guidance. This orb is near-indestructible by anyone below B-grade, and any item within will be destroyed if the orb is. Requirements: Blood Wine Brewer

Jake was wrong. As it turns out, no one wants to learn how to brew fine wine using blood. It even had an accompanying book and a description written by the seller, really trying to play it up. Yet the interest was so low it was kind of comical, and it ended up being bought for forty-two million to someone from the Noboru clan.

Were they planning on becoming vampires? Jake considered. Maybe some of them were...

Vampire samurai... yeah, that actually sounded kind of dope.

As it had been sold rather quickly, there was another waiting period. Jake looked at the ceiling of the booth he was in as he really hoped something good would show up. If not now, then during that special phase rewarded due to their performance in the Treasure Hunt.

What he didn't know was that the final phase would have items he would surely classify as ghost pepper level spicy.

Chapter 369 - A Unique Encounter

Unique items had always had a bit of a special status in the multiverse. It was as much a rarity as it was a categorization of items. Unique didn't simply mean it was a wholly unique item – even if it very often was – but was as much because it simply couldn't be slotted into any of the other rarities.

Jake's Mask of the Fallen King was no doubt a unique item as only one existed in the multiverse. Only one could exist in the multiverse due to its relation with the King of the Forest, a Unique Lifeform. Unique in that case, truly meaning "there exists only one such thing," but Unique Lifeforms also had the commonality that all of them were freakishly strong for their level.

Another trait unique items often also had. Jake's own Root of Eternal Resentment was an example of this. If it had an actual rarity, Jake had no idea what it would be... when he first got it, probably ancient-rarity, but it had absorbed so much curse energy, so was it legendary now? Above legendary? In some ways, it was pointless to try and give it a rarity at all due to how it worked.

This naturally begs the question... would Jake want a unique rarity bow? Honestly, there was no way to answer that. Jake wasn't even sure how one would look. What would determine the damage? The durability? Would it somehow scale? Jake also didn't recall ever seeing a unique item with a level requirement besides Tomes.

In the end, Jake really did not know what truly made something unique or not, but he did know that everything with a unique rarity tended to be interesting. And he liked interesting things.

Luckily for him... that sentiment was shared by others on Earth too. When the third unique item popped up, he saw another Tome, and Jake held high hopes when he noticed it was his Tome.

[Akashic Tome of the Fulgarian Depthcaller (Unique)] – Allows the user to acquire the class Fulgarian Depthcaller if compatible. Requirements: Lvl 99-199 in any class. Compatible user.

[Storage Orb of the Fulgarian Depthcaller (Ancient)] – A storage orb containing items to assist a Fulgarian Depthcaller, including equipment and guidance. This orb is near-indestructible by anyone below A-grade, and any item within will be destroyed if the orb is. Requirements: Fulgarian Depthcaller

Jake himself had displayed little interest in both items when he found them, at least when it came to potentially using them himself. However, he did recognize it could be a valuable item, especially after he had experienced the nightmare that was battling deep underwater. If a foe could create similar circumstances... Jake could see it being a difficult battle.

A second after the item was posted, sixteen bids had been placed, making the price skyrocket to four hundred million. Then, without any further bullshit, it leaped straight to a billion Credits, courtesy of the Holy Church. Jake was already ecstatic... as he saw the price jump to one-point-two.

“Who is that?” Jake asked as he saw a name he had seen a few times before buying some valuable items.

“A merchant,” Sultan just answered without offering any explanation.

“A competing merchant,” Miranda elaborated as she smiled. “And the one acting as a seller for more than two hundred independent Pylon cities and even more smaller settlements.”

Jake frowned at having never heard about the guy before. According to the auction interface, he was simply called Arthur, and Jake turned his attention to the outside of the booth as he looked across it. "Who is he?"

Miranda did not hesitate to point the man out as he sat in a corner together with a group of seven people whom Jake did not recognize... but all of them had kind of high levels. What's more, one of them was proudly wielding the Blood Spear Replica, and others were wearing ancient rarity items he recognized.

As for the merchant himself... Jake couldn't say he didn't recognize him, even if it took him a moment to remember... in fact, he had seen him a few times before. Sometimes in the very office, he used to work at. "... that's Jacob's dad."

He was an older man with graying hair and a well-trimmed beard. He was currently wearing a robe with the hood down, clearly not attempting to hide his appearance whatsoever. When he checked his level, the guy was only level 119, and the party around him was stronger, averaging around 125, but compared to the top of Earth, they are behind. Roman was level 125, and Jake sure wouldn't put him at the top, even if he was strong.

Frowning, Jake wondered what the hell was going on. He knew Jacob's dad was some bigshot before the system and likely one of the wealthiest people globally, but that very rarely translated to exceptional performance post-system. In actuality, it was often the opposite.

"Are you certain?" Sultan asked, confused. "I haven't heard that intel before, and from my knowledge, Arthur does not have any active dealings with the Holy Church at all..."

Jake shook his head. "Dead certain. He was a private man... but I definitely recognize him."

"This is... odd," Sultan just said, frowning.

Also confused, Jake tried to not question it as he just enjoyed seeing the man below be willing to spend so much on his Tome. That is until the Holy Church placed a bid of one-point-two-five billion, only to be instantly upped to one-point-three.

"They are bidding against each other," Miranda said. "And not in some fake display... spending hundreds of millions on that wouldn't be worth it..."

"Were they enemies before?" Sultan asked Jake.

"Not to my knowledge, but I didn't know Arthur very well," Jake explained. "The few times I did meet him, he seemed nice enough, and he and Jacob always looked like they got along. But I also recognize I am not the best at analyzing social interactions."

"Strange," Miranda said, frowning. "I will try to find out what is up, but it is difficult due to the distance between some factions. You told me traveling from Haven to Skyggen took you four days at nearly top speed, and they are even farther away than that, I reckon. In fact, none of the major factions have made contact with any of them outside of system events and through communication facilitated by Patrons."

Jake thought for a bit and found it weird no one had made contact, but then he suddenly had a thought. "They are on another continent."

The two of them looked at him for a bit, as Jake had to clarify. "That would make sense, right? If not, wouldn't some faction have made contact with them? Also, they clearly want a water-based class a lot, so they may even be close to shore."

"That is entirely possible..." Miranda muttered. "I had come to believe that all of humanity was placed on a singular continent, but I guess it is probable they are on another. Neil, do you know anything? From what I know, you space mages shared quite a lot of locational information."

Neil, having listened in from the start, just shook his head. "Some cities are far away for sure, but if they are across a vast body of water... that isn't something I or anyone I have met can determine. We can't even calculate the distance properly. Space is more stable and unstable in different places, making it either easier or harder to travel through. All we have to determine distance is the required cost for the teleport. Additionally, it is a lot easier to teleport through the open space above an ocean than through a mountainous landscape, so to us, it may seem like a city across an ocean is closer than even something like an underground city only a few thousand kilometers below the surface."

The three of them nodded, appreciating the brief lesson in space magic and teleportation. Jake could also understand it quite well... like how his One Step Mile took him further while Yalsten was breaking apart or how it couldn't teleport him as far while underwater.

"Either way, we can't really confirm or deny it right now... I am sure there are also plenty of settlements on our continent people have yet to make contact with outside of events too," Jake said. "So let's focus on the important things for now. Like earning money."

And earn money he did! The Akashic Tome of the Fulgarian Depthcaller ended up going for one-point-six billion Credits and some change. Primarily because the bidding had become a bit silly towards the end, with both parties only raising by the minimum ten million per bet. The Holy Church and Arthur clearly didn't get along, and it seemed like this time Arthur won out as he got the Tome.

Having sold off all his items, Jake looked at his wealth. Before selling the Tome, Jake already had over three billion due to the performance of the legendary items before, especially the Token, and now with the funds from the Tome on top... Jake was a rich man.

Credits Available: 4,658,177,118

Sultan was also smiling from ear to ear. Jake theorized that with how merchants got extra rewards based on performance during the event, then the reward from selling the most expensive item was probably awesome. So far, using Sultan, Jake had sold the most expensive one by quite a margin.

That didn't appear to change either, as the next few items were auctioned off. They included one more Tome for a profession revolving around some kind of smithing, and then there were two unique items to make beasts grow like the Mystbone. Neither interested him, but then a third one came.

So far during this entire event, Jake hadn't felt especially lucky, but finally, he felt like his fortune had turned.

[Gyne Nucleus (Unique)] – A Nucleus granted by the system to the newly integrated ninety-third Universe. It contains a vast amount of energy and Records that will allow any female Ectognamorph that consumes it to grow faster and gain powerful skills.

It was an insect Nucleus or an ectognamorph one if one wanted to use the ordinarily acceptable term for insect-like lifeforms in the multiverse. This particular Nucleus came from a gyne, the word for an insect of the female caste of insects. Jake was surprised that no beasts had found it before, but that was just his luck.

He placed a bid right away and only met a bit of competition as the price jumped to twenty million. The other beast-only items before hadn't gone for much either, and Jake could see why. Most beasts useful for humans probably wouldn't gain much from consuming them anymore, and there was always the risk of the beast becoming hostile if it got too strong. However, none of that mattered to him because Jake had an egg that needed it and knowledge of how to better use the Nucleus than likely anyone on Earth.

However... he soon met an issue. A few more people began bidding on it after no activity for five or so seconds, making the price climb to thirty million. Jake frowned as he quickly caught on.

Jake thought quickly as he grabbed Roman by the shoulder. "Roman, quick, take these Credits and bid on the Nucleus."

The man, to his credit, did not even hesitate as he accepted Jake's request and placed a bid of thirty-five million. Magically, no one else seemed to want to place a bid, almost as if they were waiting for Jake. Feeling curious, he decided to effectively bid against himself by placing one at forty million when only one second of the ten-second countdown remained.

Two seconds later, a bid of forty-three million was placed by another party.

"Fuckers are targeting me," Jake said with annoyance. "Roman just bid again."

"Sure thing, boss," he responded jokingly as he bid forty-six million. This time Jake didn't fight himself, and the ten seconds expired. Roman got the item, and the guy didn't hesitate as he opened a system trade window with Jake again to give him the excess Credits back and summoned the Nucleus.

"Just give the Nucleus and keep the money," Jake said as the man shamelessly closed the trading window and smiled cheekily. "Aye aye!"

"You're a pirate now?" Jake asked as he took the Nucleus, seeing it was just a fist-sized marble.

"I did just commit robbery, ya know? That's the darn easiest four mil I have ever earned," he said with a belly laugh as he patted Felicia on the back. "We eating good tonight!"

"We're in the middle of nowhere, and we don't need food," Felicia answered curtly, Roman still just laughing.

"Okay, now who were those assholes targeting me?" Jake asked Sultan and Miranda.

"No idea," the merchant answered. "Probably just the seller's friends or something like that trying to get the price up to earn a bit more. Smart move to use a proxy... but also smart for them to try and fleece one of the richest people on the planet."

Jake just sighed as he found the entire situation unnecessarily annoying. He still felt totally fine with what he paid for it, but it was just a hassle to deal with.

The next item was another unique one for beasts. Jake still kept watch of it all, seeing if something popped up Hawkie or Mystie could use. Sylphie also looked but seemed to not care about any of it. Besides, she was far too busy in her little vest, having discovered she could change the colors on it.

“Do you have the slightest idea what the bonus round will offer? Information provided by your profession?” Jake asked Sultan.

“Nothing, you know as much as I, though I believe there is cause to assume the items offered will be aimed directly at the main contributors of the final battle,” he answered.

Jake nodded as another item went up for sale, this time from the Treasure Hunt. And quite an item it was.

[Chalice of Vampiric Blood (Unique)] – An artifact used by the vampires to allow others to join them and embrace the vampiric race. Once Yalsten began to fall, blood was still in the Chalice, and as time passed, it retained its original function, even after the vampire that had offered blood was long dead. Consume the blood within to get an opportunity to change your race. Once the blood is consumed, the Chalice will cease to be. Warning: vampires can only have either a profession or a class. Some skills related to the lost profession or class may be lost or changed. Stat-bonuses from classes will be reduced by 10% if chosen over a profession, while a profession will provide +10% more stats per level. All current race skills will be lost.

Reading it gave Jake flashbacks to his own D-grade evolution and the Malefic Dragonkin evolution. Vampires were very much in the same boat as Dragonkin, being a mix between fully enlightened and a monster. This did mean their race will also provide a lot more rewards, including some dope-ass race skill for sure.

“Any of you guys wanna become a vampire?” Jake asked the people present.

They all looked at him for a moment as he added. “Maybe you can even get one of those variants that sparkle under sunlight.”

“Man, fuck off, my girlfriend brought m-“

“It wasn’t that bad,” Felicia cut in.

“-me to see that very interesting movie,” Roman tried to save it.

Jake snickered at the guy, the others also smiling. None of them wanted to become a vampire, but Jake still added. “The Sword Saint and I made an agreement, so if you do want to, we can figure something out. The divine artifact from the Treasure Hunt can help transform people too. Probably better than the Chalice.”

There was still no one showing an interest, but Jake felt like he had to put it out there. However, the same could not be said about others, as the Chalice ended up being sold for over half a billion. Seems like there are still those out there with teenage fantasies, Jake joked to himself, ignoring all the good reasons to become a vampire.

The minutes ticked down as they all waited for the next listing. But instead of getting another item, Jake was met with a system message. They all were... but not one he had expected.

Let the bonus auction round begin.

Everything suddenly went silent, as Jake heard or felt nothing around him. Without thinking, he just left the booth as he appeared outside and laid eyes on what had appeared.

In the middle of the auction hall stood a figure. A humanoid form, free of any truly discernable features besides the fact that nothing was discernable. The bald head, not a single trace of hair, white eyes without pupils... it was a figure he had seen before.

It was the form of the being he had chosen to name Greeter that he met during the Introduction and then after the tutorial for the store.

"Yes," the being suddenly answered before Jake could ask if it was the same. Yet, it seemed to only have spoken to Jake as no one else reacted. All just stared. No one spoke, no one reacted; everyone just stood there blank-faced for a moment.

At this time, Jake let all his instincts loose as he failed to hold himself back. He focused his sphere on the being but found nothing there. In fact, with any of his senses but sight, it didn't exist. His instincts were also entirely silent. He could not evaluate the being at all...

Villy said that Bloodlines and Transcendents exist outside of the system, Jake thought. But... not above...

Perhaps a part of Jake had thought that surely, the most powerful of gods had to have some kind of control or influence over the system. Possibly able to stand above it in places... that they had the power to have an impact. But that illusion was now entirely dispelled.

The system did not need to be powerful, for it was already omnipotent. Transcendents... Bloodlines... did not exist outside of the system because the system couldn't control them. They existed outside because the system allowed them to. Perhaps they were even designed to be uncontrollable... or just bugs in a system not fixed on purpose...

Villy had told him many times trying to comprehend the system was a waste of time. It wasn't something that could be done... for to comprehend the system would be to comprehend everything there is, and that comprehension itself would still merely be a part of the system. Every action, everything accomplished, was merely an expansion of the system itself...

Jake simply stood in the air and stared as the being spoke again, neither confirming nor denying his theory.

"Welcome, denizens of Earth."

Chapter 370 - You Get An Item! And You Get An Item! Everyone Gets An Item!

Jake collected himself as he entered the booth again, shaking his head.

"That is that same thing..." Felicia muttered once he was inside.

"Yeah, it is," Roman nodded.

"Is that the personification of the system?" Miranda asked curiously.

"Thinking about it is a waste of time... it simply is," Jake just answered. "Trying to understand the ununderstandable will only lead to understanding what it wants you to understand."

“That made no fucking sense,” Roman muttered.

“Neither does an omnipotent system taking a human-like form to hold an Auction for a bunch of D-grades,” Jake countered.

“Good point, I guess,” he answered. “But why is that damn thing not talking?”

“Because we are,” Jake guessed. When no one else said anything... the system entity began talking.

“This auction round has been awarded to the denizens of Earth due to exemplary performance during the Treasure Hunt event. All bidding will take place using Credits. All possibilities of borrowing Credits are no longer available. Only individuals who participated in the final phase of the Treasure Hunt will be allowed to bid during this round. Without further delay, let the auction begin.”

The moment it stopped talking, Jake registered it was as if everyone attending the event had heard it at the same time, even if clearly some like their group had made the entity delay. Time... does not work as it should. Perhaps reality itself is entirely controlled.

But focusing on the matter at hand, Jake was happy to see that the bidding was limited to participants of the final phase and that the borrowing option was gone. Hopefully, it would allow Jake not to waste as much money if something good did appear.

He was unsure what to expect as the being down on the central platform summoned the first item.

“The first item is a Heart of Darkness. This item can be used to improve skills of the dark affinity and works best with ones using purely the dark affinity. The bidding starts at two hundred million Credits.

This time, it appeared that they would not be shown simply through a system interface but be shown in reality. Due to this, Jake considered leaving the booth to get a better feel for the item, but just when he thought it, it was as if the entire frontal window of the booth disappeared and mana washed in. It was still blocking the outside from looking in, but it seemed like it allowed everything else to enter.

The first item looked like an impossibly black fruit about the size of an apple, and the mana that washed into the booth from the outside was purely black mana, far denser and potent than anything he had ever felt before, even than in the chamber with the Umbral Lotus.

Jake identified the item on offer... and it truly set the stage for this part of the auction event.

[Heart of Darkness (Unique)] – A Heart of Darkness offered directly by the system due to Earth’s performance during the Treasure Hunt event. Consume the Heart of Darkness to be filled with an intense amount of dark energy and experience potent Records of the affinity itself. Will greatly assist in improving any skill using dark mana. Uses remaining: 3/3 Requirement: D-grade

Without knowing for sure, Jake had a feeling this kind of item wasn’t just valuable by Earth standards, but on a multiversal level. The potential to upgrade a skill was nearly invaluable, especially considering how much the Viper praised Jake’s Path of the Heretic Chosen. To consume an item that would allow one to do that, not just once, but three times?

Sultan’s theory that the items offered were tailored to the participants in the final fights also just seemed more true than ever. This one was clearly aimed towards his brother and those from the Court of Shadows. Maybe even Jake himself a little. However, while Jake could use it for sure... then he wasn’t

going to bet on it. One reason was that his brother needed it more, and the other was that the price had already reached nine hundred million Credits, and Jake wasn't sure he wanted it that much.

The bidding functioned just like before using the same interface, and it still displayed the name of the bidder. The top one was Caleb, but a few independent factions were also bidding, as well as the undead also wanting it. Jake just sat back, a part of him feeling lucky one could no longer borrow money, as if one could, then Priscilla would have probably not lost to Caleb in the end, as his little brother got it for one-point-five billion Credits.

Based on the bidders, the ones who could take part were those that had chosen not to leave when given a chance to before the Monarch appeared. This still left thousands to bid, but as people couldn't borrow money, then, in reality, it was only a select few with enough resources to participate.

Without any words or motions, a second item appeared. This one was a floating crystal, reminding Jake a bit of the Pylon of Civilization.

"The second item is an Intermediate Dungeon Core. Bidding starts at a hundred and fifty million Credits. Be warned that using a Dungeon Core without relevant skills or expertise will prove difficult."

[Intermediate Dungeon Core (Unique)] – A Dungeon Core offered directly by the system due to Earth's performance during the Treasure Hunt event. This Dungeon Core is of the intermediate level and can support monster spawning up to low-tier C-grade. Must have a suitable environment to activate and spawn the dungeon. Requirements: Soulbound

Yet another item appeared of tremendous value. Offered so casually, it was almost a joke. Jake knew the value of Dungeon Cores simply due to random talks with Villy. A Dungeon Core allowed one to create their own true dungeon. Not just a subdimension, but one with all the dungeon features,

including all of the different dimensional versions-shenanigans found in natural dungeons. It also allowed access to an entirely new kind of interface and power, though there were limitations.

This one was only an intermediate core, allowing one to at most spawn weak C-tier creatures within... but that was still more than enough for any faction to instantly gain a lot of power. They all knew it as the bidding began.

“Will Haven attempt to buy this?” Sultan asked.

Miranda just shook her head. “We have no Dungeon Engineers among us, and we already have a natural dungeon.”

The man just nodded and smiled. “Then don’t mind if I give it a shot... the resale value alone makes it worth it.”

Jake said nothing as the price climbed, soon reaching over a billion. At that point, Sultan had already bowed out, too stingy to truly invest. It was down to the Holy Church and the Risen bidding against each other, with Casper facing off against Jacob. In the end, Casper won, with the price reaching one-point-seven, the most expensive item sold yet.

“The third item is a necklace created only to be used by a true master of vital energy. Bidding starts at fifty million Credits,” the system being said the moment it had sold the core. A necklace that looked to just be a small crystal on a chain appeared, glowing slightly.

And if the items before had seemed aimed at specific people, now it was just shameless.

[Life's Immortal Mind (Legendary)] – A necklace offered directly by the system due to Earth's performance during the Treasure Hunt event. This necklace holds a vast storage within of pure vital energy and can store incredible amounts more. Allows the user to use this vital energy to create a shield around the soul, protecting against soul and mental attacks. Infusing the vital energy storage with power is a slow and arduous process. Enchantments: Life's Immortal Mind. Requirements: lvl 130+ in any humanoid race. 100,000+ Health Points.

Jake looked at it as he just laughed out loud. He couldn't help himself at the ridiculousness. Jake had a lot of health himself for his level, and yet he only had a measly thirty thousand compared to the required hundred thousand.

Anyway... Eron bought it for a hundred and thirteen million Credits, the price only going as high as it did as others purposefully increased the price. Jake didn't, as he saw no reason to annoy the guy and knew the pain of assholes forcing you to spend more Credits on items you would obviously need. It was a no-brainer that the madman would buy it. His biggest weakness was mental magic, and now he was offered a way to use his vital energy to create a barrier to defend against even that.

And the item clearly made for Eron was apparently not the only one.

"The fourth item is for those who treasure their blades above all else. Bidding starts at fifty million Credits," the system said as the second shameless display appeared. It was a simple-looking scabbard that appeared far too large for any sword, but Jake saw why that didn't matter when he Identified it.

[Scabbard of the Treasured Blade (Legendary)] - A scabbard offered directly by the system due to Earth's performance during the Treasure Hunt event. This scabbard will take the shape of any bladed weapon inserted and slowly bond with the blade, taking on properties related to it. This scabbard will protect the blade from any damage, slowly repair it from any damage taken, and consistently keep it in peak condition. While the blade is sheathed, it will be infused with energy from the scabbard based on the

blade's properties. This energy can be released all at once when drawn for a mighty blow, with remnant energy lingering for a period afterward. Enchantments: Treasured Blade. Requirements: N/A

The target of this item couldn't be more obvious. It was tailor-made for the Sword Saint, and the old man was also the first one to place a bid. However, this was not an item only he could actually use, contrary to the necklace. In fact, there were many sword-users. Heck, even Jake could use it as it did not specify it needed to be a sword necessarily.

Sadly for everyone else... the old man had not been bidding much in prior rounds. But he had been selling. The price quickly climbed, and it ended up going for three-hundred and seventy-seven million Credits. Jake now sat with high expectations and prepared for his present to appear. Because it was practically just presents given, even if they did have to pay for them themselves.

Now he was ready. The Sword Saint had just gotten something, so surely it was Jake's turn.

"The fifth item is a cursed wooden spike. It is a perfect weapon for any curse master, while only a burden for those without the expertise to use it. Bidding starts at fifty million Credits."

Okay, it was now Casper's turn. That was fine, and Jake was happy for his friend. The spike was able to improve the power of any curse channeled through it and could even replicate itself. It looked like a perfect weapon for the Risen and his curse powers in all ways. He also learned that using curses wasn't that mainstream as the price only went up to a hundred and fifty-one million, and that was only because the Holy Church were being dicks.

"The sixth item are gloves made for those who prefer to use their fists, viewing their own body as the best weapon. Bidding starts at fifty million Credits."

Oh yeah, Carmen also needed her stuff. It was understandable; she did well during the fight too. The gloves were also great, just like the spike, and made all melee attacks better, but more than that, they would originally reform if the hands or arms were damaged, along with being incredibly resilient. They even said that any skills working with fists would function as if they made actual skin-to-skin contact.

Surely. Surely, it was Jake's turn.

"The seventh item is a shield for those willing to give up their own life for others. Bidding starts at fifty million."

[Bulwark of the Martyr (Legendary)] - A shield offered directly by the system due to Earth's performance during the Treasure Hunt event. This shield is incredibly durable, and anything blocked releases a pulse of healing energy, restoring health to everyone around the user. Does not heal the user. As a true martyr, sacrifice your own life energy to restore the health of another. The user can also choose to sacrifice their own life, releasing a pulse of healing energy that restores Health Point corresponding to the maximum Health Points of the user. Enchantments: Martyr Requirements: Soulbound

... Bertram did help, sure. That big powerup where he practically killed himself did some serious damage to the Monarch, so Jake recognized his contribution for sure. It was brief but powerful, so it was only fair he also got an item. Though Jake found the entire naming and sentiment of the shield a bit funny... is it really martyrdom to sacrifice yourself when you can just resurrect again? Honestly, that part of Jacob's class was the most overpowered.

It barely needs to be said that the Holy Church bought the shield, but they did have to spend over two hundred million on it because the undead wanted to be assholes back. As far as Jake knew, they didn't even have health points, making the shield entirely useless to them.

By now, Jake was certain it was bow time.

“The eighth item is a quiver-“

Oh no you fucking don’t, Jake thought as it continued.

“-for one who has embraced the power of fire and their bow alike. Bidding starts at fifty million Credits.”

Jake felt a wave of relief wash over him as this item was not the one aimed at him. Instead, it was clearly made for Maria, and when Jake identified it, that only became more clear. It was a quiver able to store arrows of pure magic, and from the description, it apparently contained a space filled with intense fire energy to nurture arrows placed within and even allowed Maria to summon arrows using the fire mana stored.

Maria was also the one bidding on it, and there really was no competition. This item was just so specialized, making it only go for eighty-two million Credits. Jake once more had no interest in taking what in his mind belonged to someone else, and besides, he had already gotten a legendary quiver he believed was better.

“The ninth item is a ring able to contain the powers of lightning and darkness. Bidding starts at fifty million Credits.”

Caleb’s turn. Jake wasn’t even mad anymore. Why be mad? It would be his turn, eventually, right? Caleb got it for a hundred and two million due to this one also being rather specialized. But Jake was fine. It was his turn now, right? Who else was there?

Well... except Sylphie.

“The tenth item is one suited for wind elementals with untapped potential. The Gift of the Wind is only useful for wind elementals, and any other race fusing with it will suffer damage or death. Bidding starts at five hundred million.”

[Gift of Wind (Unique)] - A Gift of Wind offered directly by the system due to Earth's performance during the Treasure Hunt event. The Gift of the Wind is created by countless wind elementals of varying races to give to one of their young in an attempt to create a champion. Any wind elemental consuming it will be able to stray closer to its true Origin.

Jake frowned as he checked the description of the item. Visually the thing itself was also surprising as it was a small transparent creature. Was it even an item? Jake wasn't sure... whatever this Gift of Wind was, it kept changing as it took the shape of birds, clouds, just a wing, a small tornado, and a plethora of other forms every single second.

He began to doubt if Sylphie could even use it... Sylphie wasn't an elemental as far as he knew. Elemental-adjacent, sure, but an actual elemental?

But her reaction upon seeing it dispelled that doubt as she began flapping her wings and making noises, and from Jake's connection with her, the message was clear... she wanted it like she had wanted nothing ever before. Even more than head-pats.

Jake didn't hesitate to place the first five hundred million bid. He sat ready to fight whoever dared try and steal the item from Sylphie. The minimum bid on this item was the highest so far, so he knew it had to be good.

Five seconds passed without anyone else bidding. Then seven. Eight. Nine. And without anyone else even trying, ten seconds passed, and Jake got the Gift of Wind.

"The item has been sold for five hundred million Credits."

The moment the words were spoken, the thing appeared right beside Jake, likely because it couldn't be put in spatial storage. Jake barely had time to wonder what to do with it as it flew over to Sylphie by itself and began zooming around her as Sylphie also flapped her wings happily.

"I guess that answers all doubt if you can use it," Jake said with a smile.

Sylphie responded by snapping her small beak forward and gulping down the weird Gift of Wind in a single move. Then she just settled down as if Jake's head was her nest. She then closed her eyes and seemed to doze off as she went to sleep.

Jake couldn't help but smile and lifted his hand to pet her a bit as she seemed to be dreaming. Sure, he hadn't gotten a bow, and now the system had decided to return to selling unique items, so Jake had resigned himself for the worst. But at least Sylphie had gotten something good.

And then... then it happened. A mythical event spoken of for ages. Prophesized and wished for, yet never seen. For but a moment, the stars aligned as destiny was realized and wishes came true.

“The eleventh item is a bow for a hunter that stands atop the food chain. Bidding starts at fifty million Credits.”

It was a fucking bow.