

Level Up Legacy - Chapter 10: Master Ronin -

After walking for half an hour in thoughts, Arthur found himself at the address Si gave him. Unlike what he expected, the address led to a Villa on one of Kera city's hills. Arthur could see most of the city from here, as well as the ocean lacing the horizon. He wondered if he could enjoy this view one day from his own house. He then dismissed these thoughts and rang the Villa's bell. After a short while, a girl opened the door. She had a plain-looking face with shoulder-length curly brown hair. The first thing Arthur noticed about her was the distinct mole on the right side of her chin.

"How can I help you?" The girl asked, confused. Arthur took the paper Si wrote for him and handed it over, wordless. The girl took the paper and frowned, making Arthur doubt if Si pranked him. Although it was more like a whisper, Arthur heard the girl call someone a shameless bastard.

"Follow me," The girl said and went inside. Arthur felt awkward for a second before he followed her. They walked through a hallway and a living room, but Arthur couldn't look closely as he tried to keep up. They reached the backyard where he could see a pond with rocks surrounding it, and an old maple tree sat beside it. Beneath the tree was a large stone where a bald old man sat with his white beard swaying in the wind. He sat motionless under the tree and had his eyes closed.

"Gramps! The bastard Si sent someone!"

Arthur felt relieved that Si's name was mentioned, even if he was cursed. He looked at the old man who now had his eyes opened unlike earlier, and felt a sudden pressure being emitted from him. The old man was frowning, probably at his granddaughter's foul mouth, but he regained his serene expression a moment later. He looked at Arthur for a moment and smiled.

"Come here, kid." The old man's voice was clear, although a bit weakened by age. It was hoarse yet firm as if he held conviction in every word he said. The girl gestured toward Arthur to go forth and went back inside.

Arthur ambled toward the maple tree and sat on the stone the old man gestured to. A wave of peacefulness swept over him erasing his fatigue, and only then did Arthur notice the runes the stones held.

"How is Si?" The old man asked with a hint of wistfulness, seemingly reminiscing the past. Arthur tried to think of an answer but he was at a loss.

Seeing his hesitation, the old man sighed and nodded. "So, he sent you here just like the others. It seems he isn't that far from reaching his goal."

"What do you mean?" Arthur tilted his head in puzzlement, as Si didn't tell him anything about this. The old man shook his head and continued.

"Si is gathering allies to make his group, people he could trust."

"How did he know he can trust me?" Arthur asked, feeling doubtful.

"His eyes, they're special. They can look into people's hearts. He probably liked what he saw in you."

"Then tell me why he sent me here. He said I needed to see you, to learn things from you, before anything else." Arthur asked as he remembered what Si has said in the arcade.

"In return for becoming Si's ally, I can help you with your mana. I can see you have just awakened. Most people would awaken when they're 14 or 15, but you're already past 18. Others have a head-start over you in terms of mana control, quantity, and even abilities. That's why you need to learn how to increase your mana and how to control it more efficiently." The old man smiled a little as he explained.

"How do I know I can trust you?" Arthur asked although he felt his Legacy's will agree. Although the Legacy was but a tool for him to grow, it also contained the will of one of the nine guardians. However, Arthur couldn't just say yes and let go of all his fears.

"Here's my card. You can look me up when you get back home." The old man handed his card over and Arthur read it. A name and a number were written on it, along with the Villa's address. His name was Master Ronin.

Back at home, Arthur sat alone with his thoughts. Too many things were going on that he needed to plan first. He wasn't the smartest person around and he knew many can take advantage of him. He didn't want to end up being used by others and that's why he needed to research things for the next few days.

First was Master Ronin. As he looked him up, many photos of him and his achievements came up. Unknown to him before, Master Ronin was a

renowned figure in the academic world. He was the ex-vice president of the Hall of Warriors, the ex-principal of Jarano College. What interested Arthur was his latter position, as Jarano College was a floating city that acted as an international college for awakeners. It didn't only train students but was a research center for anything magic and dungeon related. After extensive research into it, Arthur's heart beat faster as he read about a department in this college. It was renowned worldwide for being one of the best in the past several years as it competed with institutes outside the federal union of Yalveran. It was the Runes Research Department.

As he researched further, his next goals started to align themselves in his head. To further improve his abilities, he needed to research runes. There was no place better than a world-renowned facility. Attending this college would help him in his career as an awakener. He didn't know if he should only be a warrior clearing dungeons since he found his Runes Wordsmith ability to have several other fields like magic engineering, potions brewing, artifacts research, and others.

"Can I even take the college exam if I didn't finish high school?" Arthur highly doubted. That's where Master Ronin's role would come into play to help him out. As he researched further and further, Arthur felt his confidence and excitement grow. It seems it wouldn't be far that he travels beyond the gates and look for his father, the missing pillar of his family.

As waves of nostalgia rushed back in, Arthur felt his vision blur as tears streaked from his face. He remembered the days his father carried him and his brother on his broad shoulders as they went shopping for the New Year's Eve. How his mother looked happy as they came back and raced to kiss her. How he and his brother admired his father as a hero who saved his city from a dungeon break. As the night slowly passed, muffled sobs leaked from a young man who carried too much on his shoulders.
