

## The Crafts 16

### Chapter 16 : Going Out

Seven days went by with Lucas locking himself up within the store's premises. He spent the days doing what he loved; forging and reading about metals and materials. Apart from that, Lucas had also tried to find a solution to his 'curse', but there was nothing on that.

Rather than saying there was no solution, it was more like Lucas was on the bottom tier of the power pyramid, so the information he needed was out of his reach.

Lucas did find something interesting, though.

Planet Eretre was ruled by a monarchical power known as the Oklo Dynasty. The Oklo Dynasty, despite being powerful, couldn't directly rule the vast planet all by themselves, so they came up with the idea of having city-states, with each city-state having a city lord take charge of it to administrate on their behalf. At the same time, they granted each city-state a certain level of autonomy.

As such, the four continents of Eretre ended up being divided into thirteen city-states. However, it might be more apt to say that there were twelve city-states split across three continents, as one of the four continents only had a single city-state and was ruled directly by the Oklo Dynasty.

Despite being called city-states, their territories were essentially as large as nations on Earth. Each city-state had its own form of division, but the main seat of command would be the main city, which would have the same name as the city-state. Take Lucas' location for instance; the city-state was called Baylands while the main city was called Baylands city.

The lower divisions were called districts, but the five districts at the center were special because they formed Baylands City. A district was a very large city or town, nothing like their Earth counterparts.

Back to what Lucas found out, there was a certain city-state known as Digress on the Beast continent. Unlike the other city-states, Digress was formed by humans and mixed bloods or different species. In summary, it was a paradise for lifeforms and species rejected or mistreated by the hyuman society or other alien societies, after all, Eretre wasn't only populated by hyumans.

It was rumoured that there were practitioners of stellar refining there, and they had reached high levels. Even the current city-lord of Digress was a human at a high level of the Aperture Opening stage; on par with the other city-lords. However, not only was Digress city-state on a different continent quite far away, the system had based Lucas here in Baylands so leaving wasn't that simple.

"System, Digress city-state is run by a human. How did they pull it off?"

"Host needs to open the store for business; otherwise, the system can't assist the host."

Lucas was not surprised by the answer.

Nowadays, the system has been harassing him to open the store, but Lucas spent the past week revisiting his forging skills and experimenting with the metals of this world. The system already gave him a stock of metals to work with, and although they couldn't compare with the Purple Iridium and Red Iris Stone -the second metal he got as a reward alongside the former- Lucas was satisfied with them.

He planned on using a month's time to freshen up his skills and improve his strength in some way before leaving the store to explore. It might sound cowardly, but safety was important, and this was most likely his last chance at life.

Suddenly, Lucas' interface opened up in front of him with a message on it.

[[ Mission Description: The host has been delaying, and as such, the system is being forced to take action.

Overview: Open the store within thirty six hours.

Rewards: Basic immunity package for craftsmen.

Penalty: Death. ]]

"Oh wow, how supportive of you." Lucas sarcastically remarked.

Although the system's rewards were usually worth it, the fact it decided to use a mission with a death penalty to force Lucas to open the store made him feel uncomfortable. This time, the mission wasn't difficult, but what about next time?

"Host need not worry. To prevent abuse of power and to give the host free roam, the system has a limited monthly quota of self-made missions. The quotas can't be accumulated as well."

The system, which clearly read his mind, replied.

"How many is that?"

"Access denied."

Lucas gave up and exited the work-shop with a few objects in his hand. One of them was his latest creation; an object that looked like a flat board.

Apart from spare materials, there were also some blueprints and drawings for Lucas to practice and learn from. When he first spoke to the system and asked what it was, the system stated that it's role was to train a Crafts-god, not a Blacksmith god. Originally, Lucas didn't think much of it until he saw the blueprints.

Lucas placed all his creations into his system inventory and left the store after taking a quick bath and a change of clothes. The clothes, surprisingly, had appeared in his wardrobe after the renovations were completed, and they fit right into the fashion standards of this world.

With a map displayed on his communicator, Lucas analyzed his surroundings.

The location of the store was a bit isolated, one of the reasons why Lucas had managed to get it cheap, but the good thing was that it was still in the region of the market zone. The closest building to it was a closed down shop and two warehouses, but a couple metres away, there were more buildings and stores. Some of them sold clothings and apparel, while a few dealt in jewellery or some tech.

There happened to be two stores that sold weapons and handled maintenance, but they were spaced apart by at least one hundred metres. Despite that, they had a lot of traffic. One of the most frequented buildings 'closer' to Lucas was a restaurant, and it so happened that this restaurant was the reason Ramon went out of business and sold the store.

Lucas decided to check out one of the stores that sold weapons, as, in a sense, they would end up being his competitors in the future. On his way, he noticed that a few of the clothing stores around him didn't sell regular clothing. Rather, what they had in their stores was special clothing that doubled as armour.

West Wing bordered the Wastelands to the west, so although it was part of Baylands city and protected by the city patrol corps, it was at risk of attacks by desolate beasts. For this reason too, one of the most common occupations in the West Wing district was Freelancing.

Not to be confused with the equivalent on Earth, freelancing was a mercenary or adventurer role, from what Lucas found out back when he spent his time indoors reading. Some stellar refiners who were confident in their skills and needed a source of income or combat experience, would venture into Freelancing.

They would take missions from a client to either hunt down a specific desolate beast or retrieve some rare herb or material in risk-prone areas like the Wastelands. Even when they weren't on missions, freelancers would still venture into such regions to seize materials or kill desolate beasts for their parts, which they would then sell for money.

West Wing was the closest to a desolate beast habitat, the Wasteland, so it was only natural for many of the occupants and visitors to be freelancers. The lower ranking freelancers lived in the West Wing district, but the much stronger and better rankers lived in the better districts away from the slums. Nonetheless, to get to the Wastelands, one would still have to pass the West Wing district.

With that in mind, many of the stores in this market zone cater to freelancers.

Lucas walked in and took a look at the armour and special clothings the store sold, impressed by the craftsmanship involved. The armours were lightweight yet sturdy and almost impenetrable, while the special clothing looked no different from everyday wear, but the materials used to make them were not your average cotton or wool.

Even though he merely glanced at one of them, having worked with weapons and armour most of his combined lifetime, Lucas was certain that even the sharpest daggers on Earth wouldn't be able to pierce the t-shirt despite its simple appearance. Maybe the vestige, the special dagger used by one of the three kidnappers, could do some damage. But to what extent was unknown unless Lucas tried it out.

One of the blueprints at the store was a design like the armours here, but Lucas was still working on the simpler designs at the moment.

"Hello, sir, are you interested in anything here?" A salesgirl walked up to Lucas and asked.

"Not really. I'm just looking around." Lucas replied.

The girl nodded and was about to step aside, but then she halted and stared at Lucas a bit more before she left. He noticed this but acted as if he didn't. Lucas understood why she reacted like that. She probably noticed that he was a human after getting close to him. From a distance, it wasn't obvious, but under scrutiny at close proximity, a hyuman would be able to see the difference.

Lucas walked around the store a bit more as he took in the sight of the designs and clothing, there were jackets, dresses, trousers, and even underwear, both regular and special. Just as he was about to take a closer look at a trenchcoat that caught his eye, Lucas heard a voice from behind.

"Excuse me, sir, but the management wants you to leave the building."