

The Crafts 199

Chapter 199: The Truth Of The Conspiracy

Ninth level, Apertures Opening stage.

Lucas raised his eyebrows in surprise.

The middle-aged man before him was right at the door step to becoming a superhuman. He was just a step away from transcending his human nature and leaving behind the last attachments to his human ancestry.

Being at the ninth level, it was no exaggeration to say that Russell Mertens is among the strongest group of people in Baylands city-state. After all, the current city lord was only at the tenth level.

Apart from the slight shock that came about due to Russell unveiling his aura, there was no other reaction from Lucas. He had instead glanced at Melissa.

At the conference event held by Novanio Tech, that doubled as the grand opening for the Legacy Crafts dealership, Lucas had came across Laura Mertens. Despite being rumoured to be at the fifth level, Laura was able to release a hint of her superpower and this affected Melissa's health that day. Compared to the previous occasion, the aura Russell released was more than ten times stronger and harsher, which made Lucas worried about Melissa's wellbeing.

Upon noticing that Melissa didn't have any strange reactions, Lucas let out a sigh of relief before facing the Mertens family head, Russell Mertens.

'He's indeed a powerful figure. Even his control of aura was so fine and exquisite, I almost had no problem with it.' Lucas mentally praised.

At the same time, Russell had withdrawn his aura. He was a bit surprised that Lucas made not much of a response towards it, but this further strengthened his resolve.

"So, what is it you'd like to know before we get over to the topic at hand?"

"Who is involved?" Lucas asked right away.

He didn't know what games Russell intended on playing, but Lucas wanted to take advantage of this moment and learn all that he could.

"Straight to the point, huh." Russell smiled before taking a sip from the cup.

"Everyone." Russell answered calmly.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Lucas frowned.

Although he had his suspicions, Lucas believed that he wasn't a target of everyone despite the visits. If anything, the majority of those who came to visit Lucas were probably trying to take advantage of him to build a relationship with the vestige-smith backer behind the store.

"It's quite complicated." Russell replied him.

"We have time." Lucas countered.

"Indeed." Russell chuckled before taking another sip of tea.

"You should have already known about the system of government in place in Baylands city-state. The city lord rules all, but below him are the deputy city lords and the cabinet. There are three deputy city lords, but they do not wield much power."

Lucas nodded, but he still didn't understand well.

The three positions of deputy city lords was a unique role in the city-state. It was more like a false role, than one with actual power. In peaceful times, despite being deputies to the city lord, the three deputy city lords were actually below the cabinet. As long as the city lord held his position, they did not possess much power. Instead, the three deputy city lords were only allowed to participate in meetings, and perform some other activities on behalf of the city lord.

However, whenever the seat of the city lord was vacated, the three deputies would take charge. At the same time, it was more likely that the next city lord would be one of the three, unless a new candidate with better abilities appeared.

In summary, the deputy city lord position was more of a title than an actual powerhouse, since the majority of control and power were in the hands of the city lord and the cabinet. Nonetheless, that didn't mean that they were entirely figureheads.

"To the main point. You should already be able to understand why everyone is after you, right?" Russell asked, to which Lucas nodded.

"During the previous cabinet meeting with the city lord, someone raised up a motion for discussion; it was about you. They stated how you, a human as well as a non-indigene of the city-state, was in possession of technology that could redefine the vestige-smith era. The technology in your hands was said to not only be the future, but also an immense source of wealth that could potentially rival a top family.

"You should know that the current top families of today are what they are thanks to the efforts of past leaders and members. To reach this stage isn't easy, which was why the idea that a technology could enable one to do so, caused a commotion in the cabinet." Russell sighed as he picked up the teapot and filled his teacup to the brim.

"Naturally, this generated some concerns from those at the top, including the city lord. The city lord wanted Baylands city-state to retain the technology in your hands, as it would be for the benefit of the city-state. He wasn't fussy about the details or who would be in control of the technology. All the city lord cared about was having it remain in Baylands city-state. However, while everyone else agreed with this, there still remained differences in their opinions."

Russell then swept his hand over the coffee table and two projections appeared. They were both the same and were images of vague individuals gathered together to form a group. With there being two projections, there were two groups.

Pointing at one of them, Russell said,

"Some were in favour of retaining you and your workshop here by offering benefits to you. Their logic was based on the idea that the presence of you and your store would ease the entry of these vestiges into the city-state. At the same time, the sales made through exports or internal transactions would generate revenue in the city-state. The city-state could profit from this through the usual taxation.

"Some of them had even suggested that as they offered you benefits, they might as well have you ensure that all forms of trade regarding the vestiges would be done through local agencies, including exports. Through this method, Baylands city-state and its locals would be the biggest winner in all of this; alongside you of course."

He then moved his hand to the second projection.

"However, there were those who preferred to take the technology from the hands of your store, or at least, control it. They believed that it was wrong to have a human run a store with access to such world-changing technology. It was safer for it to be under the control of a member of the cabinet, and most especially, a human.

"This brought about a disagreement in the cabinet. Although it's said that you're an intermediary with your master, no one cared much about that. To ensure that everything works out well, the second group had the idea to make it seem like they're working with your store, while in actuality, they control the entire situation. In their opinions, they were confident that they could settle things with your master, and even if they somehow failed, they could retain you."

Russell pointed at Lucas. He then added.

"There's still another group which had the idea of giving you freedom to operate just like the first group, but with the clause that your master hands over the secret of the technology. But this group was too small, to make much of an impact in the situation."

"What happened next?" Lucas leaned in and asked.

"The city lord made a decision."