

The Crafts 30

Chapter 30 : Autumn's Gate Guild

"So where are we at?" Lucas asked the group during their break.

"Still a couple miles away. At the speed we are moving at, we might make it the next day." said one of the men, who had black hair but grey eyes.

Parked close to the squad was a hover-vehicle used for traversing dangerous terrain. It was called a 'Sare' shuttle or carrier, and looked like a space-shuttle but was much smaller and without the 'wings'. It was equipped with attack options and made with a tough material less susceptible to desolate beast attacks.

Most freelancer teams and guilds made it their priority to get one of these, even if it were the cheaper editions. The journey in the Wastelands was usually not smooth or safe, so having a vehicle such as this was quite helpful for most teams.

Apart from Lucas, there were seven other individuals present. These seven were the members of the Autumn's Gate guild.

Originally, Lucas was meant to move with only four of them, but coincidentally, the guild received a mission in the same direction Lucas was headed. As such, it ended up being all seven escorting him, but as this was an unplanned event, Lucas didn't need to pay extra.

The seven members of the Autumn's Gate guild included their leader, the two vice captains, and the other team members. In truth, Autumn's Gate was much larger than just the seven, however, the others weren't official members. Also, due to the risk involved with the mission, the weaker members were asked to stay behind, with all seven official members taking part.

The strength of the seven was impressive, as this was what led to the guild being renowned. The guild leader was at the sixth level, whereas of the two who went to meet Lucas, the woman was a vice captain and at the fifth level. She was quite a popular figure due to both her strength and potential, as it was rumoured that she reached this level just before her twenty-fourth birthday.

A year has gone by since then, and while her strength didn't break through to the next level, it was reputed that her current ability was nothing like the person she was a year ago.

The other vice captain, who was also at the Five Apertures Opening stage, was a young man Lucas hadn't spoken to yet. The other four members had their strength split between the third and fourth levels, making them all elite figures.

It had been over twelve hours since they departed the base station, and they had yet to reach Astranian Forest. This wasn't that their speed was slow, but because the distance was long.

The Astranian Forest was home to many desolate beasts that could compare to stellar refiners at the third to fifth level of the Apertures Opening stage. For that reason, the base station was built a couple kilometres away. Even if one were to use a vehicle, it would take over a day to get there.

"You guys have been here a couple of times, right? How was it? Any survival tips?"

As this was his first time outside the city, what's more in a dangerous location, Lucas wanted to know more about the area. This was a survival tactic from his first life kicking in. Back then, Lucas had lived his early years as an orphan, which was one of the worst-case scenarios for anyone in a world governed by the rule of the strongest fists.

It was only natural to research and absorb as much information about a foreign place as possible in order to increase his chances at surviving.

The grey eyed fellow was someone Lucas got a bit familiar with as he was chatty. He was a freelancer at the fourth level of the Apertures Opening stage named Juan.

Juan replied him,

"Well, the experience was definitely one of a kind. There aren't as many desolate beasts as the rumours say on the outer ring, but deep inside is a hellhole. For instance, while there were not many, there were still a handful of desolate beasts at the third level and a few at the fourth level. Everyone of them are more skilled than their counterparts elsewhere, like here.

If you take too long settling a fight, the noise might attract even more desolate beasts to the area. So I guess that's a survival tip. If you need something more detailed, it depends on the species of the desolate beasts, but the Astranian Forest has all types of them."

Lucas nodded in understanding. Just these past twelve hours, they had encountered a few desolate beasts on the way, with each differing drastically from the other in terms of both appearances and strength. There were different ways to take on different desolate beasts, as their weak points differed. Only experienced and knowledgeable freelancers and pioneers could differentiate.

Luckily for Lucas, the system had given him the tome, 'An Adventurer's Manual', which was an encyclopedia of different topics. One such was desolate monsters.

"You shouldn't think much about it. The main key to survival is being calm and cautious at all times. Once you see a sign of danger, do not hesitate and run." The second female in the group said.

During each fight the team engaged in, Lucas would pay attention to the techniques they used as well as their fighting style. Apart from the team's leader and vice leaders, this woman was the next strongest in the group. Her level was at the fourth level, but by using a Grade 3 vestige, she was much stronger than your average fourth level Apertures Opening stage stellar refiner.

Lucas even estimated that she could hold her own against a desolate beast comparable to a fifth level stellar practitioner.

"Well, Anna has a point on this." Juán said with a smile.

Lucas glanced at him and understood the situation right away. He might not be experienced in that department, but Lucas had some knowledge of it.

The trio chatted away and eventually rested. It was currently dark, and although there were technologies to help them see in the dark, humans were diurnal and preferred moving around during the day. Also, the nocturnal desolate beasts were so adept at hunting in the dark that a single misstep could cost one their life.

Hence, it was safer to move during the day, even more so as they were heading in the direction of the Astranian Forest.

When daybreak arrived, the group was already prepared to move, and they resumed their journey. However, they had only gone a few kilometres in when the scout signalled for them to stop.

"What's the problem?" The leader of the team asked.

He was a brawny fellow with red hair and a crewcut, who gave off a thick military vibe. His deep voice and thick muscles made him look formidable and scary, but he was actually an approachable figure with the alias Crimson Fang. At the sixth level of the Aperture Opening stage, the man was quite famous in the freelancer community of Baylands City.

It was even rumoured that some big forces had once tried to recruit him, but after retiring from the army, he had instead formed his own force; the Autumn's Gate guild.

Today, the Autumn's Gate guild was among the top twenty freelancer squads in the city with a total force of almost fifty men.

"I spotted tracks of a Blue-gemmed Cockatrice up ahead." The scout, who was at the third level and controlled the scouting drones on the outside, said.

Crimson Fang as well as the other team members in the vehicle, frowned. Ever since they were closing in on the Astranian Forest, they released a couple of scouting drones to move head of their vehicle. The team's scout was a man with sharp-eyed vision, which made it easy for him to spot some irregularities in the terrain, using the scouting drones' vision.

A Blue-gemmed Cockatrice was a dangerous monster that usually operated at the Astranian Forest.

It was on par with a fifth level Aperture Opening stage practitioner, but as the desolate beasts of the Astranian Forest were on another level compared to the others, even a fifth level stellar refiner would almost have no complete confidence in taking on this creature alone unless with a powerful vestige in hand.

Usually, the Blue-gemmed Cockatrice resided in the depths of the Astranian Forest, so most freelancers who came to the location never came across it unless they went deeper in. As such, encountering one at the fringes was unheard of before.

Crimson Fang couldn't help but take this occurrence seriously. Powerful desolate beasts were known to be territorial, and the only reason they would abandon their operating region was either due to a lack of food or they were forced out. None of the options were good for them.

"Keep going, but be more cautious and monitor the surroundings even tighter. Try to avoid it, but don't go too far out of our path. Juan, work with him as well. The rest, prepare for a possible battle.

If we can't avoid it, we have to finish the battle as quickly as possible." Crimson Fang gave his orders.

With his strength, a Blue-gemmed Cockatrice was no problem, but Crimson Fang still had to consider the possibility that there would be even stronger desolate beasts up ahead. Regardless, he had no choice for now. The pay for the mission was very high, even for them, and there was no way they would retreat without even reaching their destination.