

The Fall 386

Chapter 386: Galau

"I am sorry, I am flattered but I am interested in the fairer sex," Ogras said without waiting for Galau to speak up again. "As for this guy, I'm not sure? I think he's converted to ascetic cultivation for some reason."

Galau blankly looked at Ogras for a few seconds, obviously unable to compute what the demon was talking about.

"What? No! I like.. I like the ladies as well," Galau stammered. "I was just making conversation. I have been here for so long and it simply gets a bit tedious after a while, so I like making new friends."

"Oh, how long have you been here?" Zac asked with interest.

He knew that Ogras hinted at the fact that Galau might be a scammer, but Zac didn't care. He was interested in learning more about the Allbright Empire, and they were in need of information. If this guy had been here for a while he surely had a general sense of the situation.

"I only have a month before I need to leave this place," the man sighed. "It's a shame. There are not many places where so many forces can gather and display their wares. Interesting treasures and techniques keep appearing in the auction houses."

Zac could only shake his head with a wry smile. There was nothing to gain by comparing oneself to others. This man seemed to have taken his visit to the Tower as an opportunity to relax and do some shopping, while Zac was here to fight for the future of his planet. But someone like this could be quite useful as well.

"So you're knowledgeable about the shops in the Base Town?" Zac asked curiously.

"I have gained some understanding of what's available, except what's in stock in the top tier firms," Galau nodded.

"How are the auction schedules? Are there any interesting ones coming up?" Ogras immediately asked with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Interesting Auctions?" Galau thoughtfully repeated. "I hear that a main branch member of the Talovor Trappings arrived a week ago, they are holding an auction of their wares in three days."

"What kind of wares?" Ogras asked.

"Mainly wearable treasures. Rings, Amulets, bracelets. That family consists of both craftsmen and traders, and they almost only sell their own wares. Their specialty is defensive treasures, so I expect the auction will turn quite heated," Galau dutifully explained.

Zac nodded in understanding. Ogras had already explained that defensive treasures and arrays were suppressed in the Tower, but not completely. Having a great defensive treasure could still save your life or allow you to reach a higher floor. It was no wonder that such things would be in high demand at a place like this.

Normally Zac wouldn't mind spending some of his money on defensive treasures to supplement those he had, but he was hesitant to spend too much money until he managed to get his hands on his top priority items; medicine for Alea and a shield.

"Do these Talovor sell shields as well?" he probed.

"Like physical ones?" Galau asked with surprise. "No. They focus on consumable and rechargeable defensive treasures. For a shield you would either have to find a blacksmith outside of this place or hope that one appears at the general auctions. The System gives them out sometimes as quest rewards to people who don't want them, and they sell them here to make some money."

Zac only sighed in understanding, not too surprised about what Galau said. It was essentially the same as what Calrin had mentioned before. Most good shields were custom-made since they were so expensive.

"Anything else?" Ogras probed.

"Let's see..." Galau muttered as his brows furrowed. "The Naspheyi clan holds a weekly auction, the next one is tomorrow evening. The quality of the auction can vary a lot, but it's never too bad. Sometimes amazing items appear as well. Visiting cultivators usually go to them to sell off items they don't need in order to gather money for other treasures before attempting the climb. There are a few more places like this, but Naspheyi is generally the most reputable among those open to the public."

Zac shot a look at Ogras, only to see the demon's eyes glazing over. Zac finally remembered that attending auctions was one of Ogras' favorite pastimes back in the day, and he sighed with exasperation. The demon was supposed to be helping with information gathering, but he was daydreaming about going on a shopping spree.

"Have you heard of Trentach Society?" Zac asked, remembering the man they met by the stairs.

"Trentach? It's a high-grade general store," the youth said. "They carry almost everything, but they do not really stand out in any department. Trentach is actually a cooperative venture between eight allied clans who run the store together. None of the clans can be considered a supreme force, but their combined might is nothing to scoff at."

"How do you define the grade of the stores?" Zac asked curiously.

"By how close you are to the tower. It's graded the same as most things, from low to peak. Of course, the grade of a business doesn't necessarily reflect the quality of the wares. But it is usually indicative of quality," Galau explained. "This restaurant could barely be considered medium grade, for example, but their food is above average."

"I am looking for top tier healing treasures, do you know where I could find that?" Zac asked as he kicked the demon under the table to wake him up from his dreams of auctions.

"Healing treasures?" Galau repeated with some confusion. "You can get them at any pill shop, they are everywhere. Or do you mean something specific?"

"I am looking for something that can heal a fractured soul," Zac explained, not opting to lie.

There were likely various pills with soul-mending capabilities in the pill shops, but an extraordinary treasure was needed to heal a fractured soul. It wasn't as simple as a soul wound.

"I'm sorry, such treasures are not readily available in even the higher-tiered Pill stores. But I've seen things that might work crop up every now and then in the auctions," Galau said before hesitating. "Of course, there's always the Zethaya Pill House by the tower entrance, but..."

"But what?" Zac asked with a frown.

"They are an alchemist family and likely one of the three wealthiest clans among those who control shops by the entrance. They are extremely powerful, but more importantly, they have a vast network of connections," Ogras spoke up for the first time in a while.

"So they have pills for healing souls?" Zac asked. "Then what's the problem?"

"If any shop has it, then it's that place. But their shop is invitation-only, just like all peak grade stores," Galau explained. "You can't just enter at will. There are always people desperate for their pills, but the Zethaya turn them all away."

Zac frowned, but Ogras nudged him to not keep pressing the issue. He knew he shouldn't make too big a row at a place like this. Besides, these Zethaya people might invite him if he performs impressively enough in the tower. It should be in their interest to form some ties with promising cultivators while they're still young and weak.

"We might as well head to the auction tomorrow," Ogras shrugged. "Even if they don't have what we need, we might still be able to find some clues."

Zac nodded in agreement.

"Let's look around today, and we'll head to the auction tomorrow," Zac agreed.

"Oh, if the two gentlemen are amenable, let me host you tomorrow! I have been awarded a bronze membership due to my regular visits, so you can join me at my table rather than sitting crammed in the back," Galau enthusiastically said.

Zac looked over with some hesitation at Ogras, who seemed to be a bit confused as well. Why was this guy so helpful to two complete strangers? The universe was seldom so benign. Galau seemed to understand their skepticism, and hurriedly spoke up again.

"I promise, I just wish to be a good host. How about this, I will simply meet you outside the venue before it starts tomorrow. There's no way that I could do anything suspicious right in front of the Nespheyi Clan's doors, no?" he hurriedly said. "Besides, going to the auction as a bronze member has various perks, such as additional information on the items for sale, and complimentary liquor."

"Deal," Ogras said without hesitation.

"Excellent!" Galau exclaimed as he raised a glass of some unknown alcohol. "For new friendships."

The dinner lasted for another hour where Ogras and Zac interrogated Galau for as much information as they could before they split up for the day. Galau initially wanted to accompany them as they walked around Base Town, but the two excused themselves, citing that they needed to get their bearings.

"What do you think?" Zac asked as his eyes followed Galau who scurried away after paying the tab in full.

"A bored young master who wants to pretend to be a commoner for a day?" Ogras ventured. "In either case, we'll figure it out sooner or later. Between my looks, smarts, charms, and your sturdy body I'm sure we can handle any scheme that guy has planned. So let's just let him pay for our food and drinks."

Zac snorted in response, but he didn't contradict the demon. He didn't sense any malice from the guy, so he would let things play themselves out. The two spent the next couple of hours looking around in the shops, gathering snippets of intelligence everywhere. It quickly became apparent that Galau had been pretty much accurate in all the information he shared during the dinner.

They found nothing that would help Alea's condition in the normal stores, even when they went to the upscale establishments in the inner city. Those places had pills that would help with a wounded soul, but not a fractured one, and the two quickly confirmed that their best bet was hoping that someone would put up an item for auction at one of the major houses.

Only when it started to get dark did they decide to find some place to stay. Zac wanted to simply find some empty building in the outer rim, but the demon staunchly refused, citing hours lost every day just walking back and forth to the slums. He wanted to rent a place as far inside as possible, preferably in the inner sector.

Eventually, the two settled on a hotel that covered a huge area at the edge between the middle and the inner zones. It was essentially a gated community where every guest rented their own smaller mansion with its own gardens and arrays. It was extremely tranquil and a perfect spot to meditate during the nights.

What impressed Zac the most was that it actually had a spatial array covering the whole compound, just like the Ayr Hive. The size of the place was at least three times larger when they entered, and the two rented a small mansion for the price of 250 000 Nexus Coins a Day.

It was a steep price, but it was nothing uncommon in this place. Luckily they only planned to stay for ten days. Otherwise just the lodging would have turned into a real sunk cost. According to Galau the buildings starting in the middle of the Base Town came with those arrays from the beginning. They were not something that the owners controlled. That was one of the reasons the inner buildings were so contested.

They contained the best spatial arrays, providing extremely luxurious accommodations to whoever controlled the place. But that wasn't the most important reason that forces wanted to claim structures as close to the tower as possible. The Cosmic Energy was denser closer to the tower, and Galau said there was even some Origin Dao in the core sector.

Origin Dao was nothing special for Zac or even Ogras by this point, as they came from a newly integrated planet. But for people coming from an established force it might be what would allow them to push their Dao Seeds or Dao Fragments to the next step before entering the Tower.

Some buildings even possessed temporal arrays, though those were only used for business purposes as it was impossible to cultivate inside those structures. The auction houses were a prime example of that.

There were a lot of treasures to auction off, but people did not want to spend half a day of their limited time in the Base Town to visit it.

With the help of the arrays they would spend less than an hour in real-time, while still not missing out on the action. Zac couldn't understand why the System would bother to set things up like this, but he soon understood the motivation. It wanted to create conflict.

As long as there were good lodgings and bad lodgings there would always be covert and overt competition for the best spots.