

The Fall 387

Chapter 387: The Naspheyi Clan

It wasn't without reason that Zac believed that the difference in the quality of the lodgings would cause friction. He had already witnessed an attempted take-over of a shop with a decent location at a crossroads with a lot of foot traffic. It was a group of Purple humanoids that tried to snatch it from a group of Golems that reminded Zac of the proprietor of the Merit Exchange.

An intense battle ensued, but the humanoids were eventually forced to give up on their takeover after the shop owner took out an amazing offensive artifact. However, that wasn't the end of it. Multiple forces assaulted the humanoids the moment that they started to flee. Apparently they would have been safe if their attempt succeeded, but now that they gave up they became fair game.

It was a world where the powerful lived and ate well, while the weak could just look on from the distance. There was no such thing as equality.

The two mainly meditated during the night as they knew that they had almost no chance to evolve their Daos within the Tower itself. The atmosphere in their borrowed garden was quite nice though, and it allowed Zac to freely gaze upon the ever-changing lights surrounding the tower. Unfortunately he didn't gain anything that would allow him to form his second Fragment, but he still had a few days to go.

Zac and Ogras had already decided to enter the tower toward the end of their visit. They could accomplish most of their goals anonymously right now as they didn't know what would happen after climbing the tower. Ogras wasn't completely sure, but he guessed that the current Zac should be able to reach at least the 5th floor, something that was pretty rare all things considered.

It might not sound like much climbing only five out of 9 floors, but that was something that only happened a few times a year among the elites of thousands of planets, and everyone succeeding would cause a certain amount of spectacle. That would ideally result in making connections with stronger forces, but it might also put a target on his back.

So they would only allocate one day after the Tower itself to find a backer, and endeavor to finish most of their purchases before.

The auction they were going to attend didn't take place until the evening, so Zac and Ogras took the time to continue their exploration. Ogras wanted to spend another day 'gathering information' at restaurants, but they instead headed to a reputable information broker in the Inner Zone on Zac's insistence.

There were a lot of things that he needed to know, such as the requirements for Specialty Cores and Arcane classes. Zac had already asked the demon next to him, but he had no idea. Ogras had only gotten annoyed by the questions since they were simply a form of humblebragging in his opinion.

The information merchant was run by a sect rather than a Clan, and they were called Seed of Jnana. Zac was pretty surprised to hear that the sect was actually populated by monks, and it made him think of Abbot Everlasting Peace. Was Lord 84th perhaps someone from this sect? It was a strong C-Grade force according to rumors, and splitting off into a 100 000 incarnations might be the Clan Ancestor's bid at breaking through to B-Rank.

None of the monks were present in the store though, so Zac couldn't make any comparisons to the chubby powerhouse's appearance. They were instead met by a puppet who led them to a private room, and Zac was happy to hear that they did indeed carry the information he was looking for.

A short introduction of Arcane Classes only cost 10 million, probably since it was general knowledge among the more powerful factions. Zac immediately paid for it, and the puppet engraved the knowledge onto a blank Crystal. The puppet didn't immediately give a quote for information about specialty cores though.

"Specific or general knowledge?" The puppet asked with a lifeless voice.

"General," Zac answered after some hesitation.

He was currently needed general information about Specialty Cores, as his information was a few snippets of rumors from various sources. Besides, even if this place had information on Duplicity Cores there was no guarantee that it would be relevant for his mutated version.

"245 Million Nexus Coins," the puppet said.

"What's included in the report?" Zac said, whinging a bit at the price.

The puppet opened a screen, and a short presentation was included. A decent list of common cores was included, as was a general guide in matching various types of classes with cores. It mentioned there was a long list of successful combinations to prove the theories. But most importantly there was a general guide in nurturing and evolving cores.

Zac could only bite the bullet and cough up the money since he didn't even know what to look for in his goal of upgrading his core as things stood right now. There was quite a lot of information in the second crystal he bought, but he breathed out in relief when he skimmed to the part about evolving.

He breathed out in relief when he read that Specialty Cores could only be upgraded to a higher rank after one had upgraded one's Class. But at the same time it said that the strength of cores was limited, so they would quickly become too weak to provide any assistance unless you kept them at the same rank as your class.

Zac also had the puppet list all the specific cores it had intelligence on, and he was both relieved and disappointed that there was nothing on the Duplicity core. He wasn't sure if he could handle the cost of a specific knowledge packet if a general one cost that much.

Hopefully, that would mean that the core would still be usable at the start of E-Grade, allowing him to put the matter aside until he dealt with the Undead Empire.

The Naspheyi Auction House was a grand structure three quarters in from the edge of the plateau, placing itself somewhere between the middle and the inner cone. It reminded Zac a bit of the Hagia Sophia, with four grand ornamental towers in the corners and an enormous dome atop the main structure.

When the two approached they saw people streaming toward the Auction House even though it didn't start until an hour later. Some were perhaps there to enter an item into the auction last minute, but most likely just wanted good seats.

Zac and Ogras weren't really interested in entering this early, especially since time moved quicker inside. If they entered now they'd be forced to wait half a day before the auction started. So they instead planned to walk around the area to see if they could find anything interesting.

A lot of people were taking advantage of the large draw of the auction house and held impromptu auctions of their own treasures, shouting on top of their lungs to advertise their wares. Some did it because the Auction house didn't find the treasures precious enough, others were probably unwilling to pay the 10% commission.

Of course, there were a lot of scammers as well, wanting to take advantage of inexperienced people.

Zac and Ogras barely had time to make the rounds before they saw a familiar figure wave at them from the distance, some excitement apparent on his face. Unsurprisingly it was Galau, and it even looked like he had been on the lookout for their arrival.

"Just what is this guy's deal?" Zac mumbled with some bemusement. "Is he lonely?"

"I think he is looking for an expert, but he's running out of time," Ogras said with a half-smile.

"An expert for what?"

"Someone to help him reach a higher floor than what he would be able to reach himself," Ogras said. "Strong people often do that for payment."

"So like what you're expecting me to do for you, but without pay?" Zac snorted.

"Our situation is different. What're a few floors between friends?" Ogras said as he shot Zac a toothy grin.

"If it's something common there should be a market for it, no? Most people wouldn't turn down free money if they were strong enough," Zac said, even thinking if it was possible for himself to make some money on the side.

"My guess? He seems to enjoy the auctions, and he has already spent the money that was meant for a carry," Ogras shrugged. "So now he's looking for some strong-looking hillbilly's to do it on the cheap."

"It's also possible that he's offended someone, and no one wants to stick their neck out just for some extra income. So he's forced to skulk around new arrivals in a circumspect manner, looking for someone who could take him up. We are probably not the first people he has approached if that's the case."

"So we should distance ourselves from him?" Zac asked. "We already have enough on our plates as it is, no need to take on additional problems."

"No need, if my guess is true he's desperate, and he'll be far more helpful than even an information merchant. If we get confronted later we can simply proclaim ignorance and simply point to the fact that we just arrived," Ogras smiled. "For now let's enjoy his Bronze Ticket and free liquor."

Zac sighed, but he eventually complied with Ogras' idea. It was not even certain what the demon speculated was correct, and if he started to act on every little suspicion it would become impossible to get anything done. It was just as possible that the guy was simply lonely after staying here for months and wanted to make new friends.

“Wait,” Zac suddenly said. “You said that your Grandpa spent a huge amount of money for you to climb to the third floor? Did you simply pay someone to carry you?”

“Of course,” Ogras snorted. “I was only level 54 at the time. What do you think, that I would rush inside there on my own? I had only just formed my first Dao Seed at that point.”

“So it wasn’t actually with your own power you got to the third floor,” Zac snorted. “That wasn’t how you made it sound before.”

“I would be able to conquer the third floor with my own prowess by now, so what does it matter,” Ogras muttered, looking a bit glum. Clearly this was a bit of a sore topic for the proud demon.

After I’ve provided you with all kinds of opportunities, Zac lampooned in his mind, but he didn’t bring it up. No one had worked harder for Port Atwood than Ogras, after all.

In the end the two decided to head over to Galau, who excitedly led them around the area full of hawkers displaying their wares. The two didn’t really find any great deals, but Zac bought a decent number of Divine Crystals from a Golem who sold them for 10% cheaper than what Calrin charged.

Ogras also bought a slab of metal, which was apparently complementary to what his black spear was made from. Perhaps he wanted to have some of the material on hand in case he found someone that could upgrade it or even turn it into a proper Spirit Tool.

But neither was ready to buy any valuable treasures outside since they didn’t possess as discerning an eye as Calrin. Galau seemed somewhat proficient at inspecting treasures, but the two wouldn’t put their trust and wallets in the hands of someone they just met.

Soon enough the trio entered the massive Auction Center, and Galau kept trying to make a good impression as he immediately forked out the 200 000 Nexus Coin entrance fee for both of them. Zac was surprised when he heard the price, and he couldn’t help but look around at the sea of people entering the building.

The Naspheyi Clan held an auction like this every week, and according to Galau they also held a few major auctions a year that were even grander. On top of that they took a 10% commission on every sale that took place, though that fee could probably be negotiated down. He couldn’t imagine just how rich these guys were.

Of course, most of the entrance fee probably went into keeping the Temporal array active during the auction. The System set them up, but they still required crystals to run. But he wouldn’t be surprised if the Clan still made billions of Nexus Coins every week.

“The Naspheyi is an ancient martial clan whose ancestor is reported to be Mid or High C-Grade. Their family members generally use spears,” Galau explained when Zac probed about their heritage.

“It’s not a mercantile clan?” Zac asked with interest.

“Most huge clans would have some businesses to provide the resources for cultivation. To be a cultivator is to be forced into poverty, always scrambling for resources,” Galau said. “But they are mainly a martial clan. This auction house is one of their main sources of income, and they are pretty ruthless with anyone trying to take it away from them.”

Zac nodded and looked around the venue. It was simply enormous inside, and he realized this place was just more than an Auction venue. There were multiple restaurants and bars, and Zac's eyes widened when he saw that there was even a brothel.

And just as Zac feared the shadows around the demon started to twist as the demon unhesitantly teleported away a second later.