

## The Fall 389

### Chapter 389: Dreams

"Is there any way to cleanse the toxicity for real?" Zac asked.

"There are various means, like certain Natural Treasures. There are even arrays that will slowly purify the body. Most alchemy clans are researching ways to reduce pill toxicity in their bodies almost as ardently as they are researching new recipes," Galau said.

The biography of Galvarion that Zac read in the Marshall Library immediately popped into his mind after hearing Galau's explanation. That mortal had stayed at the peak of E-Grade for over a century before finally forming his core. Was this related to pill toxicity perhaps?

Zac eventually spent 130 million Nexus Coins on a pill that would push forward his Race by a decent amount, pill toxicity or not. Most of the herbs gathered in Port Atwood was geared toward gaining E-Grade Race, and wouldn't really assist him in reaching D-Grade. And that was something that he had to get done sooner or later, as he would quickly approach the Attribute limit otherwise.

He also spent 100 million on a pill that was guaranteed to break open a node beneath level 80, and another 120 million for a pill with a similar effect. Hearing about the Pill Toxicity made him a bit worried, but he would simply have to find a way to deal with this later. Surviving the Undead Incursion and the Dominators was simply more important in the short run.

Ogras finally bought an item as well, which apparently was a treasure that was known to strengthen the psychic bond between a cultivator and his contracted spirit. It was no doubt bought with the purpose of getting a better handle of the mysterious creature that lived in his shadows, and Zac could glean that the situation was less than ideal since the demon spent over 300 million on it.

Zac was happy that the demon found an opportunity to get a handle on his parasite, but his mind couldn't help returning to the advertised shield that was listed. For some reason there was no detailed description like those Zac read for the Spirit Tools, and he didn't know if that was a good or a bad thing.

Luckily the wait wasn't long, as two assistants produced a massive shield that thumped down on the ground with enough force to cause the whole scene to shake slightly. The shield itself was more of a large heater shield compared to the huge spiked scutum he used until it broke.

It was made from some material that Zac couldn't recognize, but it obviously was extremely heavy. It looked like a bit like carbon fiber ingrained with streaks of copper. Only the core was a bit different as it was covered in dense white fractals that formed a circle. It didn't have the same ferocity as his old shield but Zac could tell it was of much higher quality.

"Next up is this spectacular item wrought from almost pure Neprosium that has been treated with expert care to provide the highest standards in durability and regeneration," the auctioneer said with a smile as she held her hand on the anthracite and copper shield.

"What do you think this item would go for?" Zac asked with a low voice.

"It doesn't have an attunement and it's not a Spirit Tool, but the material it's made of is extraordinary. A piece of raw Neprosium that large would alone cost hundreds of millions of Nexus Coins. I don't

understand why someone would use such a large piece to create a normal shield. The creator will risk making a loss," Galau said bafflement. "Neprosium is rare, and it's a popular material in defensive treasures."

"Perhaps the craftsman had a quest or an inspiration," Ogras shrugged. "They made it for the experience rather than money. I would say you will have to fork out at least 700 million if you want this. People would be willing to pay over 5-600 million just to melt it down for the materials."

"The creator named this shield [Everlasting], and I can inform you that it is the only shield appearing in today's auction. I am sure many of you are a bit confused as to why a blacksmith chose to make this item," the auctioneer said with a smile, playing on the suspense in the room.

The name made Zac strongly resonate with it. It not only reminded him of the ancient protector in his Dao Vision, but it also indicated that it would be able to take blow after blow. Wasn't that just what he needed?

"Truthfully it is a failed item. The creator wished to create a mighty Spirit Tool but it wasn't to be, and it ended up a normal shield without a soul. However, the creator felt it was still an item of beauty, and chose to sell it rather than reforging it," the auctioneer continued.

"So that's why the materials used are so damn expensive," Ogras muttered. "But that blacksmith seems a bit loony to not repurpose the materials."

"The extravagant choice of material puts it at the very peak of E-Grade items, something that you will not encounter more than once. This, combined with Neprosium's inherent ability to take in and even strengthen almost any attunement, makes the shield the ultimate companion for any warrior used to the vanguard," the auctioneer finished her introduction. "Perhaps you can even upgrade it to a true Spirit Tool in the future!"

"Turning a mundane tool into a Spirit Tool is extremely difficult," Galau whispered when he saw Zac's interested expression. "But what she said about Neprosium is true. It is a really high-quality material. But you should know that Neprosium doesn't mix well with a lot of materials, which might make it a picky eater when you try to upgrade it even if you manage to bring it to life."

Zac slowly digested the information as he took a look at his savings before making a decision. As long as the shield didn't become too expensive he would buy it. The inherent quality of the material might come in handy in the future, as he walked the path of both life and death. This shield might be usable in both his forms, something that was hard to find.

"The starting bid is 400 million Nexus Coins," the Auctioneer said. "Minimum increase is 25 million."

That price was already well over what many of the earlier Spirit Tools sold for, but the bidding immediately pushed the price to 500 million. Zac guessed that those bids were mainly from people who wanted the shield for the material, as the bidding drastically slowed down after having passed the value of the Neprosium itself.

However, it did steadily keep climbing in price, something that seemed to surprise the demon.

"I was wrong," Ogras whistled. "It might even pass a billion."

“Shields are rare,” Galau explained. “Not many use them, and they are hard to make. So few are produced, creating a bidding war when a good one finally appears. Besides, Tool Spirits aren't as important for shields as for weapons. The weapon's Tool Spirit can increase your lethality to a large degree, but a Spirit Tool shield is mostly better at regenerating itself after taking damage. That's something Neprosium is already extremely good at by itself.”

Zac waited for a bit longer, but when the price rose to 800 million he immediately increased the bid with 100 million nexus coin hoping to dissuade the competition. But only a few seconds passed until another person raised it with 25 million, at which point Zac raised it to a billion. This repeated twice until he finally bid 1.2 billion while his stomach was churning due to the price they had reached.

It was a huge sum for Zac who had felt the pinch when spending a few million on the creator vessels just a few months back. A billion nexus coins would be able to pay for all the expenses of his Academy for years, perhaps decades, but it wasn't even enough for a single item here. It was truly a rich man's game.

“1.2 Billion? Anyone?” the auctioneer smiled as he looked around. “Remember, the shield might not have an attunement right now, but who knows what will happen when you manage to upgrade it.”

It was the most expensive treasures sold so far by over 600 million nexus coins, but it still wasn't any record-breaking amount. She was obviously trying to push the price a bit further with all kinds of exclamations.

“Gaining an attunement during evolution?” Ogras snorted in derision. “How often are people that lucky? And you need to make it a Spirit Tool First.”

Galau didn't say anything, but he nodded in agreement, proving that it was truly just a sales trick. Zac felt pretty annoyed as he inwardly cursed the woman to close the auction. Luckily no one else fell for the auctioneer's exhortations, and Zac successfully won the bid.

Time passed and the item got more and more impressive, but neither Zac nor Ogras bid anymore. The last section only had ten items, each one of them going for well over 1 billion nexus coins. The final treasure was actually an urn from the Limitless Empire, an item predating even the System itself.

It did emit a trace of spirituality, but Zac couldn't tell if there was anything special about it. It had just been excavated from an unknown Mystic Realm according to the Auctioneer, and the method to unseal it was unknown. Perhaps a great treasure waited inside, or perhaps it was just wine that went bad billions of years ago.

The urn eventually went to a lady sitting on one of the top platforms for the staggering price of 47 Billion Nexus coins. The only reason Zac even knew that was because she had entered an open bidding war against a young man sitting on another of the platform.

“That's some gamble,” Ogras muttered. “Or perhaps she just collects those things.”

Zac could only shake his head in bemusement. Life truly wasn't fair.

Unfortunately there were no soul-mending pills or treasures on today's auction unless one of the unknown treasures had such capabilities, but the haul wasn't bad overall. Zac had already received his items in the intermissions so the group didn't need to stay behind to complete any transactions.

"I'm sorry that you didn't find the thing you were looking for. But don't worry, it's only been a day. There will be many more opportunities," Galau said after they had exited the venue. "How about I treat you two to dinner to cheer everyone up?"

Zac wasn't really in the mood, but Ogras preceded him to graciously accept, loosely mentioning a certain restaurant that he had heard quite a few good things about. Judging from Galau's face that place was obviously expensive, but he quickly recovered and led the two there. He even went so far as to book a private booth for the three of them and ordered a large set of dishes and drinks for the three.

"So, I guess it's about time you explain why you've been following us," Ogras said after they sat down by their table. "If you plan to rob us you should understand by now we aren't that wealthy."

"I don't harbor any malicious thoughts!" Galau said hurriedly, his eyes darting back and forth between the two. "But truthfully there is a matter where I require your help. I need assistance in climbing the tower."

"It's a carry after all? But why us though? We are completely unknown, and you don't know our strength," Ogras asked skeptically.

"That's part of the point," Galau sighed. "I need to reach at least the thirtieth level without it being obvious I was carried. Preferably even higher."

"Thirtieth level?" Ogras muttered. "It's a pretty hard carry, but nothing impossible for the stronger people who offer services like that. Why not just go to them? Are you trying to get a cheaper deal?"

"I am afraid my family will find out from one of my cousins who is also here," Galau sighed. "The point of me climbing is to gain more freedom, but it will become invalid if this gets found out. But if I simply enter with a few unknown friends I made while dining out it will be harder to prove that I was carried through."

"I have a decent chance of taking on the 3rd-floor challenge with the help of my saved-up treasures, but I doubt I would be able to climb any further after that," Galau admitted. "But I need to reach at least the 30th level to achieve my dream."

"What? Why?" Zac asked with confusion. "It's just a title, and isn't it based on the floor rather than level? As long as you pass the third floor aren't you fine?"

"Because I wish to become an appraiser and run a store," Galau said, an unfamiliar sense of determination appearing on his usually timid face.

Zac was completely stumped, and he looked over at Ogras to see he could follow what was going on. But the demon looked just as confused as himself, and he had even frozen mid-bite.

What the hell had reaching the 30th level to do with opening up a store?