

## The Fall 390

### Chapter 390: Balance

It turned out that Galau's family was a stuffy old martial clan that almost exclusively raised warriors for the Allbright Armies or adventurers who explored wild Mystical Realms on behalf of their owners. Galau's ancestor was one of the 7 grand elders in the family, and the pressure was on him to carry on the legacy.

However, Galau had become enamored with buying and selling artifacts after having handled the inventory that his clansmen had gathered while traveling or fighting wars. He had asked for permission to set up a store, but the elders had denied his request.

"Why say no?" Zac asked with confusion. "Sounds like opening up a side-business would only be good for the family. Cutting out the middle-man."

"For one it's about legacy, but it's also an undeniable fact that families with a stricter focus are more likely to progress, no matter if it's on the martial path of business ventures," Galau sighed. "The ancestors are all dreaming of rearing a C-Grade Powerhouse that can elevate the clan, so they do everything in their power to raise promising warriors. Especially us in the main branch."

"What does this have to do with reaching the 30th level?" Ogras asked.

"I wanted to change profession, giving up the martial path. That would generally see as a sign of weakness, or that I was giving up. It might affect my whole branch negatively. But my Ancestor eventually gave me an ultimatum after I kept pestering my elders. He told me to reach the 30th level in my upcoming visit to this place, to prove that I did have the power to proceed on the martial path if I wanted to."

"But you don't," Ogras laughed.

"So you want to trick your grandpa and your clan to let you do whatever you want?" Zac added with a raised brow.

"Well... Essentially, yes," Galau coughed. "And that's why I need to use this circuitous method to not get caught."

Zac looked over at Ogras to get his opinion. The demon only shrugged in response, meaning he didn't see any issues with the proposal, and Zac felt the same way. It was a bit shady, but that wasn't really their problem. Carrying one person to the 30th level shouldn't be too difficult, especially since it was just the early stage of the 4th floor.

"But why us?" Ogras repeated. "You haven't explained that part."

"Because there is no fear in your eyes," Galau finally said after a short pause. "The biggest asset to becoming a successful business owner is to have an understanding of people, and I believe this is an area where I shine. It's something that has allowed me to triple the wealth I brought with me, as I was able to sniff out those who lied about their products or were desperate to gain a quick buck."

"I have observed the warriors who have come and gone the past months, and most carry a well-hidden fear in their hearts as they carry themselves here. It's natural, this town is full of hidden dragons and

people don't have their elders to protect them. Even the Tower itself brings a real risk of death even with its protective measures."

"But you two are completely unafraid, and I know it's not due to stupidity as with some," Galau continued, his speech increasing in fervor as he turned to Ogras. "The two of you seem to take this as a stroll in the park, not even flinching when you saw those scary people sitting on the floating platforms. This makes me sure you are dark horses, the people I've been waiting for over the past months. You surely have the capabilities to reach the fourth floor."

Neither denied the claims since what he said was essentially accurate. Zac didn't worry about some people causing problems, as he felt confident in rebuffing most people when he had the System on his side. There was the risk of running into someone with top tier E-Grade arrays, but it was doubtful that anyone would throw those items around on some random person who kept to himself.

And even if they did he still had [Loamwalker] to get away in an instant in case someone took out an unknown crystal. He felt confident in surviving at the edge of even a top tier array thanks to his defensive skill and a massive pool of Endurance.

When neither Ogras nor Zac spoke up Galau's eyes lit up in delight, but Zac felt a bit sorry for the guy. He had a feeling that Galau's plan was bound to go awry. Who would believe that Galau's accomplishment was his own after Zac elicited a projection from something above the fifth floor?

But Zac needed the money, so he could only hope the effect of making the acquaintance of someone like himself would make up for Galau's plans. Besides, he never mentioned any stipulations about him or Ogras not being allowed to ascend too far.

"So what are you ready to pay for bringing you to the 30th level?" Ogras asked, making Zac lock onto Galau with interest as well.

"How about 3 billion Nexus Coins to take me to the 30th level? Each, of course," Galau said. "And we can negotiate an additional price for taking me even further when we get there."

Ogras' eyes glistened with greed, and Zac saw that he was about to agree without hesitation. But there was something else that Zac needed even more than money at the moment, and an aspiring merchant like Galau might be just the right person to ask for it.

"Throw in a Dao Treasure for each of us as well, and you have a deal," Zac said, receiving an enthusiastic nod from the demon.

"Two Dao Treasures," Galau muttered, looking a bit pained. "Fine, but you'll need to take me to the 32nd floor then."

The two mulled it over for the fraction of a second before they immediately stretched out their hands to seal the deal.

Agreeing to carry Galau to the 30th floor would essentially double Zac's and Ogras' wealth, and the two ate until they barely could move in order to celebrate. The restaurant that Ogras recommended had a non-combat class Chef that brought out amazing dishes that all contained a high amount of Cosmic Energy.

These dishes didn't give any temporary boosts to increase their attributes or anything like that, but they were far tastier than anything Zac had ever eaten before. Zac finally understood why Ogras kept calling Earthlings country bumpkins, and he wasn't sure how he would go back to eating some crude meals he had thrown together himself.

Nurturing a proper Chef became one of his side-missions after that evening.

Zac spent the next few days walking around the Base town to search for items that could help his force. With the extra cash infusion from the surprisingly wealthy Galau he had some wiggle room to buy more than the bare essentials.

He first purchased a large number of low-grade talismans from a reputable store. Each one cost less than 100 000 Nexus Coins, but they would perhaps be able to save the lives of his elites in case of a crisis back on Earth. He also cleaned up a sizeable number of herbs on Calrin's List of things they needed to create medicinal baths on a large scale.

He even found a small stack of [Sky Reed] that were almost as aged as the other three herbs he gathered during the hunt, which meant that he now had all the needed ingredients to concoct more [Four Gates Pills]. Unfortunately still couldn't find any medicine that could help with Alea's situation. Many of the better stores had items that could mend a wounded soul, but a fractured one was something else entirely.

There also weren't any Dao Treasures available, which wasn't too surprising. If anyone had one they would eat it themselves to improve their strength before the Tower. Some did appear during auctions according to Galau, but they were amongst the most fiercely contested items, turning insanely overpriced.

Everyone wanted to have a couple of Dao Treasures on hand in case someone elicited a grand projection. A single projection alone usually wasn't enough to form or upgrade a seed, but there was a decent chance if you also had a treasure to help out.

So Zac could understand the scarcity, but it did put a damper on his goal of forming another Fragment before leaving the Tower of Eternity. He could only put his hopes on Galau's ability to sniff two of them out.

Ogras bought a few items as well, including things that would help out with his progress after evolving. But Zac guessed that the demon already had quite a few such resources in his possession, given by his grandfather. He should have planned on evolving soon after arriving at Earth, but was delayed by various reasons.

Galau was actually the one who bought most of them all, but what he bought during their visits to stores and the open bazaars were completely random. He explained that the items weren't for himself, but things he felt he could make money on either here or when he returned to the Allbright Empire.

Zac spent the nights sitting on his prayer mat, working his hardest to meditate on the Dao. The atmosphere wasn't quite as good as Earth, but it was far better than the Eastern Trigram Sect. That place was completely devoid of spirituality, but he felt he still could progress his Dao here. He also had the tower to help, and he had already seen three projections, though they were of the lowest kind that didn't provide too much.

On the sixth night he took a break as Ogras had brought over some expensive Spiritual Wine. The two sat and enjoyed the evening breeze in the courtyard, gazing up at the sky. The stars were unfamiliar and massive nebulas painted the sky into a mesmerizing haze. It was a poignant reminder of how far away from Earth and its struggles he was at the moment.

"This is the life," Ogras sighed in contentment, the tranquility of the night affecting him.

"Is this what life is like for those who stand at the top? Those who are part of established forces?" Zac asked, somewhat rhetorically.

"Not in clan Azh'Rezak at least," Ogras sighed as he took a sip, some wistfulness apparent in his eyes. "There was always struggle, though a different kind compared to the one we face now. But the moment that we as a family relaxed we would be eaten by one of many forces in the surroundings who lusted for our land or our inheritance. I think it's like that everywhere."

"Struggle?" Zac asked with some despondency creeping into his heart.

"Balance," Ogras answered. "The universe is a lawless place, where might makes right. Our kingdoms, empires, galaxies are in a state of a delicate balance that keeps a semblance of peace. But a small ripple will topple that balance, and bloodshed will invariably follow."

Zac understood what he meant. The moment a clan or sect declined, like through the passing of an ancestor, it would be under constant threat of annihilation. This worked the other way as well. If a true powerhouse emerged in a family it would likely set out on a path of conquest to sustain that person's continued cultivation and to raise the standard of their progeny.

Any change would result in lines being redrawn and blood spilled until a balance was restored.

"Balance..." Zac echoed, as his eyes slightly glazed over.

The solemn atmosphere was suddenly ruined by the frazzled entrance of Galau as he almost fell through the door to the courtyard.

"He's about to emerge!" Galau panted.

"What? Who?" Zac asked with some annoyance.

"Reoluv Er Suriav Prehavandar Dravorak," Galau said in one breath.

"Did you just cast a curse on us?" Ogras muttered with a raised brow.

"No that's his name," Galau said, almost jumping back and forth in impatience. "The Dravorak Dynasty is over 100 million years old, and it is the Imperial family of an Empire that is at least as strong as my Allbright Empire. I just found out that he entered the tower yesterday."

"And this Reoluv is part of this family?" Zac asked, still not understanding what the big deal was.

The Dravorak seemed like a huge force, but there were a few of them around, especially around the core of the town.

"Reoluv is the 15th and youngest son of the current reigning Emperor, born from the Emperor's favorite wife. He is someone who has received an entire Empire's blessings and resources. More importantly,

he's supposed to be extremely talented, and he is a strong contender for the throne even though one of his brothers already has broken through to C-Grade," the young man continued. "Rumors are that the previous Emperor has taken him on as a direct disciple."

"This all sounds very impressive, but what does that have to do with us?" Zac asked, still confused.

But Ogras' eyes suddenly widened, and he looked up toward the sky surrounding the tower.

"A Dao Mirage," Ogras muttered before turning back toward Galau. "Which level?"

"There is no doubt that he will pass the 6th floor, with some even saying that he has the power to reach the later levels of the 7th floor. But most are hesitant whether he would actually be able to pass the 7th floor's final challenge on the 63rd level since that hasn't happened for thousands of years," Galau said.

"Dao Mirage, haven't we already seen a few?" Zac asked. "What's the big deal?"

"Yeah, but that was one of the worst ones. If this Reoluv crashes through to the end of the 7th floor you have a chance of actually breaking through your Dao Seeds. Meditating under the vision from the 7th floor is almost the equivalent of an epiphany," Galau excitedly said as he took out two boxes.

"These are two Dao Treasures I promised. I was planning on presenting these after the climb, but this opportunity is too rare to miss," Galau said.