

## The Fall 395

### Chapter 395: Prajñā Cherry

Zac looked at the approaching trio with some apprehension, afraid that the chance of a smooth transaction taking place might be ruined. He once more tried to connect the man in the red robes or the crest embroidered on his chest with anyone he had offended, but he came up with nothing.

He still wasn't sure exactly what kind of information had been released about him to the multiverse from the 20-odd incursions he had closed, but he felt it was pretty unlikely that the matters were connected.

He had only really started closing incursions for real around two months ago. Chances were that the youth in front of him was already here when it happened, so he probably shouldn't have heard anything. Or did someone specifically send an information packet to the Tower because they knew that Zac would sooner or later arrive here?

It was a scenario that Zac felt was distinctly possible, but at the same time unlikely. The Zethaya was a real big-shot family, a peak C-Grade force. According to what Ogras estimated the most invaders were from between middle D-Grade to early C-Grade forces, with a few 'lucky additions' like clan Azh'Rezak.

Perhaps stronger forces would get access to Incursions as well, but they would probably be sent to planets that already had cosmic Energy and already powerful natives. Both Earth and the Ishiate Planets were almost completely lacking Cosmic Energy before, and the Zhix planet was only slightly better off. Worst off was the moleman planet, since it was essentially half-dead.

There were three anomalies on their planet though, the Technocrats, the Church of Everlasting Dao, and the Undead Empire. The Empire could be explained by the fact that it was only some weak rural area of the Empire that came. The Church and the Technocrats likely snatched their spots by eradicating the forces that originally owned them though.

Ogras' family had kept their qualifications hidden until their spot was secured specifically to avoid such a fate. The youth accompanying the Zethaya Clan member seemed to be of equal standing, indicating he was probably from a peak faction as well. So it was unlikely he came from one of the remaining Incursions.

But what other enmities could there be? Did he recognize the origin of Zac's bracer? Greatest certainly seemed like a man that seemed to be good at creating grudges with his straightforward manners. Or did the youth sense the splinter in his mind and want it for himself? But he couldn't arrive at any conclusions, and the trio sat down opposite of him.

"I apologize for the wait. I am Boje Zethaya. My attendant told me about your interest in a treasure that can mend a fractured soul?" the man in the blue robe spoke up with a smile.

"That's alright. I'm Zac," Zac nodded, trying to maintain a balance of deference and poise. "That right. I need something that can mend a soul that's been fractured for a while. She- The patient is currently enclosed in a stasis array to not get any worse."

The man in the red robe didn't say anything as he sat down. He only looked Zac up and down with a mix of overt hostility and disdain. Zac didn't want to give the guy an excuse to ruin his business, so he

ignored the rude behavior even if it was a bit irking. Perhaps the guy was simply some sort of elitist that didn't like 'commoners' entering his surroundings.

At least the Zethaya representative didn't carry the same sort of hostility.

The blue-robed man nodded and took out a small but intricate chest, and opened it for a short duration. Inside was a branch with a stone fruit attached to a thin stalk. Zac immediately knew it was a great treasure as his cells screamed at him to consume the fruit, and the calling was even greater than when he first encountered the Fruit of Ascension.

"We do possess this [Prajñā Cherry]. It actually comes from an ordinary F-Grade cherry tree, but a great Sage pondered on the Dao of the Mind beneath the tree for a thousand years, giving the tree and a few of its fruits spirituality. This cherry has been infused by the powerhouse and has miraculous effects on the soul, no matter if it is to heal or strengthen it," the alchemist explained. "It is a High E-Grade Soul Treasure."

"What price do you have in mind?" Zac asked, trying his best to hide how much he wanted it.

"This thing does not have any set price," Boje said. "The Zethaya clan normally hires promising warriors for various tasks, and we would be ready to offer this item as a recruitment bonus. Of course, you would have to prove a strength worthy of this unique treasure first."

"What sort of tasks? And how long would I be working for you?" Zac asked.

"Overestimating yourself," the red-robed man snorted, but Zac ignored him.

Boje awkwardly smiled as he spoke up.

"We hire warriors for all sorts of purposes. Most choose to become guardians of our clan, signing life-long contracts. Others join us for short durations like a decade or two. The requirements for the latter are a lot harsher though. Someone wanting such a position would have to pass the 6th floor of the Tower to warrant such a large payment like this cherry."

Zac nodded in understanding. It wasn't too bad to pay a high price for someone to sign a life-long contract. Those treasures would strengthen the cultivator which would benefit the Zethaya as well.

"What would a short-term warrior do?"

"Usually explore Mystic Realms with restrictions. There are some that have limits on attributes or levels, and we need strong warriors to explore for us as we can't send in our elders. The clan would claim a majority of all spoils you get inside, but you would still walk away with any titles and a part of the treasures. It's usually a great opportunity for any promising warrior," Boje explained.

Zac felt that it sounded like a pretty good deal, but he also understood there was another side to the 'opportunity'. If it was such a good thing the clan would rather send their own people rather than spend a lot of money to send in outsiders. The risk of getting killed or crippled was no doubt high in the places the Zethaya Alchemist talked about.

"I'm unfortunately unable to sign any such contract in the short term. Is there any way for you to directly sell the cherry instead?" Zac asked.

“This item is quite unique and something formed by chance. It is not something we can simply grow as we wish, so we are unwilling to part with it for Nexus Crystals or Nexus Coins. But our pill house is always interested in trades of items or intelligence of similar value,” Boje explained.

Zac slowly nodded in understanding. It might be the young man causing trouble for him, but his instincts told him that wasn't the case. A clan like Zethaya was already obscenely wealthy, and it made sense that they were more interested in unique treasures that could help them in ways that money could not.

The problem was that he wasn't walking around with any impressive treasures that he could trade for the cherry. The Amanita or the budding lotus were both probably worth as much as the cherry, but they were back on his island. Not that he would be able to bring it to this place anyway. The lotus was probably categorized as a D-Grade healing treasure which made it impossible to bring, while the Amanita was helping keeping Alea alive.

“Are you looking for natural treasures or items that might be of interest to study?” Zac asked.

He actually had two things in mind. The first was the cyborg body he still kept in his Cosmos Sack. That thing was beyond durable, and perhaps the Zethaya could study it to create pills with similar effects. Any death squad or fanatic would want a pill that could help them drag down their enemies to hell along with them when they were facing death.

There was no doubt in Zac's mind whether the cyborg corpse was something valuable. It was a creation of a top tier Technocrat faction, people who didn't even fear the Undead Empire if the little alien could be trusted.

Besides, getting rid of that thing might be for the best, in case Firmament's Edge possessed some means to track the corpse. Luckily the body was still only counted as E-Grade since he found no trouble in bringing it here, but it should at least be a Peak E-Grade treasure as he saw it.

The second item of note was the notebook regarding the Draugr corpse. It came uncomfortably close to his secrets, but no one here would be able to discern his specialty core thanks to his bracer. Perhaps the Zethaya would find the report interesting, or at least have the connections to sell the report to the Undead Empire for profit.

He could even sign an agreement that he would look for the samples when he came back and send them to the Zethaya. Then again, they could probably snatch the true Draugr body from Mhal's Clan since it seemed like a small upstart force.

If neither was of interest he would have to try something else. Perhaps this alchemist needed a carry in the tower as well? He had already decided to display his Apex Hunter-title if it came to that since that title was a clear indicator of extreme fighting prowess without divulging any specifics.

“Both are fine, we're particularly interested in items that can either help in our research to create new pills or in methods of combating pill toxicity,” Boje said, looking at Zac with some interest.

Zac's eyes lit up and he reached toward his Cosmos Sack to present the Cyborg Corpse.

“I have something that might-” Zac started, but he was suddenly interrupted by a discordant voice.

"Oh? Isn't this that treasure I was asking about the other day?" the red-robed youth said, finally speaking up. "Hadh't we already reached an agreement for a trade?"

"Huh? Rasuliel?" Boje Zethaya said with confusion, until his eyes widened slightly in realization. "Uh, of course. It must have slipped my mind due to the excitement with Prince Reoluv's ascension."

A surge of anger ignited in Zac's chest when he realized that the youth had come to create trouble after all. It obviously wasn't enough for the guy to stare at him with his shitty attitude. Zac immediately discarded the idea to take out the cyborg, but he wouldn't completely give up at this point. Hopefully Boje Zethaya would choose profits over keeping this Rasuliel character happy.

"I have a corpse of a cultivator who was modified by a peak force to have a forced evolution when approaching death. He rose from a weak early E-Grade warrior to touching upon the D-Grade barrier in the span of one minute, releasing a shocking might that killed all of his enemies before he died of exhaustion," Zac said, modifying the facts slightly.

"If you can figure out the process of this change you might be able to create a pill that could mimic the effect. I'm sure that kind of pill would be desired by all kinds of forces," Zac added.

Boje's eyes lit up in interest when he heard the explanation, and it seemed that he was about to ask a few more questions about it. But he soon restrained himself and sighed with disappointment.

"I am sorry. The item does indeed sound interesting, but our Pill House is known to keep our word. This treasure has already been claimed, and I can only apologize for my forgetfulness," Boje said as he handed over a small vial. "Please take these healing pills as a token of my apology. They were concocted by my uncle, and are some of the most effective healing pills in Base Town. I wish you luck in your endeavors."

Zac almost crushed the vial or threw it in the face of the alchemist, but he restrained himself as he put it away. Not that he would dare eat them after seeing how they acted, but he might be able to sell them for a premium later.

"My family will send over the payment within a month. Its value will no doubt satisfy you," Rasuliel smiled as he claimed the small box and put it away before he turned to Zac. "I am so sorry about that, little guy."

The world started to turn jagged and Zac's vision became tinted with red and black and as fury took hold of his mind. The innocuous taunt had turned his smoldering anger into a blazing fire, and he was fast losing control. His body shook from restrained anger, and it was all he could do from not jumping the two and ripping them to pieces.

He needed to quickly find some secluded place to wrestle back control of his mind before he did something stupid. Zac arduously got to his feet and nodded at Boje with grit teeth before he turned toward the exit. The Rasuliel seemed to notice Zac's weird state, and a taunting voice echoed across the lounge as Zac walked away.

"You said it was meant for a girl? Your Dao Partner perhaps?" Rasuliel laughed. "I am so sorry about that. Let's hope she meets a more dependable man her next life. Someone who isn't foolish enough to meddle in the Tsarun Clan's business."

Zac froze as the words echoed across the room. His thoughts became a jumble and soon enough he didn't even know where he was. His vision closed in on him and his consciousness slipped away despite his best efforts to remain lucid.

The last thing he heard before darkness consumed him was a bestial roar that was both familiar and foreign.