

The Fall 397

Chapter 397: Elites

"Pretty, why didn't you join in on the hunt?" Leyara asked with interest as she looked over at her friend with a spurious smile. "Did you know that guy would be so strong? But I still think you would have a chance to trap him."

"I've told you a thousand times, call me Daoist Summit Reacher," the beautiful woman said with an annoyed look as she glanced at Leyara.

This family and their naming sense, Leyara lamented as she shook her head. And wasn't it Swordmistress Grace last time?

The two sat at a friends' viewing terrace that overlooked the Tower Square and the entrance to the Tower of Eternity. They had all gotten the quest, but only Ulmar and Presseus had made a move. They now sat to the side with their frizzy hair, looking a bit embarrassed. They probably hadn't expected to get drowned in a sea of high-grade flames infused with a Dao Fragment the moment they set out.

"So?" Leyara probed.

Pretty was the strongest person here, which meant she was one of the strongest people in Base Town, especially now that Reoluv had left. Furthermore, as the granddaughter of that war maniac she was probably loaded with nasty treasures perfect to create havoc. It was a bit surprising she didn't make a move considering the quest reward. It was something that only those with the stoutest Dao Hearts would be able to resist.

"That guy was always so annoying, stupid upstart family. It's not my problem he got himself killed. The latest Zethaya generation must have let their excessive wealth turn their brains into excrement for things get out of hand like that. Why should I exert myself to clean up their mess?" Pretty shrugged with disinterest.

"But that guy who was with him came from your Allbright Empire though?" Leyara said with an impish smile. "I remember him hiding in the corner looking scared at the party you held a month ago."

Leyara was so bored after all these gatherings and auctions. There was finally something interesting happening, and she couldn't help but try to stir the pot a bit to make things even more exciting. She knew things would get chaotic if Pretty made a move.

She didn't just have one or two suitors who had timed their climb to be here at the same time as her. Intergalactic dating was pretty hard after all, especially opportunities to meet outside the gaze of the elders. No matter if she decided to help or hunt the results no doubt be spectacular to witness.

"I'm not from the Imperial family, why should I care about what some guy from our Empire does or what company he keeps? I don't even think he's from the Emphyrean sector," Pretty said with disinterest.

"Yeah... But your grandfather..." Leyara said.

"What does grandpa have to do with some small squabbles between the younger generation?" Pretty snorted.

Leyara only rolled her eyes and gave up. It looked like she wouldn't be able to drag her old friend into the mess.

"Besides, the fun has only started," Pretty suddenly said with a smile.

"Oh?" Leyara asked, hope reigniting.

"Haven't you noticed? We all still have the quest even though a few minutes have passed. I think the Ruthless Heavens doesn't feel this play has acted itself out yet. Won't he be kicked out of the tower in a day at most?"

Leyara's eyes lit up in excitement as she looked down at the large crowd who stayed by the entrance. Only a few were leaving, but most seemed content to simply wait, intently waiting for that lunatic to return.

"What do you think, Pretty?" Leyara said. "Will he survive? Do you think I should join in on the fun?"

"I know you don't care about which floor you end up on, why should you join this fight? As for whether he will survive..." Pretty said with a mysterious smile. "I think he will surprise us all."

"And don't call me Pretty."

Catheya looked down at the square from the window far up in the tower belonging to the Undead Empire, her pitch-black eyes absorbing the candlelight like two black holes. Calmness had already returned to the core area after the destruction of the Zethaya Pill house, but a storm was still raging inside her heart.

"Did you find out the identity of the man?" Catheya asked into the shadows, eliciting a dour zombie to emerge.

"I am afraid not, mistress," the zombie said with a bow. "The warrior entered the Pill House by challenging their array, and he only identified himself as Zac before things deteriorated. However, I did manage to find out a few facts from one of the assistants."

"Oh?" Catheya looked over at Varo, the leader of her deathsworn and her personal steward.

"He was able to forcibly pass through the array by virtue of his attributes alone. His constitution should be quite impressive. Also, his main goal of visiting the Zethaya was to find a cure for a fractured soul. It seemed quite urgent for him," the zombie finished.

"A fractured soul?" Catheya mumbled, her pale lips curving slightly upward. "The Zethaya better pray that man never grows too powerful. Such a response when he came looking for medicine will no doubt plant a seed of intense grudge. Was that what he wanted to say before he got whisked away?"

"Do you wish us to prepare an ambush of him for when he exits?" the Zombie probed. "A free level would guarantee smoothly passing the 7th floor."

"No, it would be shameful to use such a crutch in this place. Besides, I have some confidence in passing the 7th floor without any outside assistance. By the way, who was the man he killed?" Catheya asked as she looked over at her assistant.

"Rasuliel Tsarun. A main branch descendant of the Tsarun clan, but only of middling import. He was a talent to be nurtured, but not in line for succession," Varo said.

"Tsarun? Never heard of them," Catheya muttered.

"They are a somewhat young force local to this remote sector. They have some connections to the local provinces of our Empire, mainly providing high-quality corpses," Varo dutifully reported.

"How many of that clan are here right now?" Catheya asked.

"One more main branch member, 8 from side branches, and 17 employees," Varo said without missing a beat.

"Are you confident in killing them all?" Catheya asked.

"We might have to sacrifice one or two of our deathsworn, but our situation is generally favorable," the zombie thoughtfully answered, not caring why her mistress wanted to kick the Tsarun Clan out of the Base Town. "Rasuliel was the strongest member of their force. He likely carried most of their treasures as well, leaving the rest somewhat exposed."

"Good, do it," Catheya nodded.

"If I may, mistress. This might cause friction between the local province and the Tsarun clan, negatively impacting their access to new bodies," the steward added. "These provinces are newly formed and have few avenues for such resources."

"What do I care about that? We're only here because Master had an epiphany and needed to enter secluded cultivation for a few years," Catheya shrugged. "If it truly turns into a problem I'll ask master compensate the local kings after he exits."

"By your will," Varo bowed and melded back into the shadows.

Catheya's abyssal eyes once again turned toward the tower, her thoughts a confused jumble. There was no way that she was wrong in her conclusion. That crazy warrior carried a hint of aura from her clan's progenitor. But that should be completely impossible.

Her family didn't have any connection to this sector, and she and her master only passed by here during their travels by chance. More importantly, their progenitor left their clan well over a million years ago as she found herself facing the inevitable madness of advanced age.

She created two grand treasures to defend their clan against annihilation, and these treasures were still consecrated by the whole family once a year to maintain the aura of the progenitor. But they had never heard from the ancestor after she left, and every one long believed that she found her end during her search for a way to break through.

Was the grand ancestor still alive? That would mean that she either had managed to break through or found a way to stave off the madness. She couldn't wait for that axe-wielding warrior to emerge. Killing a couple of local noblemen would be a small price to pay for such a valuable piece of information.

But if the progenitor was truly alive, why hadn't she come back during all this time? Was she trapped somewhere and needed assistance? And why had she left her mark on a human? Was he her disciple? It sounded preposterous, but she had her reasons for believing it to be true.

There was an undeniable sense of death surrounding him. It might be impossible to sense for the humans around him, but how could a pure-bred Draugr of an ancient heritage not feel the aura of undeath?

That warrior might hold the clues to the questions that ailed her, and she couldn't wait for him to emerge once again.

Just who was that man?

A rancid odor rose from the cauldron, telling Boje that he had actually failed in concocting a basic [Golden Constitution Pill]. It was one of the first recipes he learned while still a teenager, and something he would be able to concoct in his sleep. Yet it had failed today.

The knock on the door made Boje flinch in fear, a sheen of perspiration covering on his forehead. He tightly gripped his fists in an effort to stop their trembling as he tried to get his fraying emotions under check.

"Enter," he said, trying to sound as unruffled and confident as possible.

He couldn't let the world know that the past encounter had scared him shitless. Others were discussing how to capture the man when he emerged in a day, but Boje only contemplated means of surviving. They hadn't seen those eyes filled with unending madness or felt the aura sharp enough to wound souls.

The reward was certainly alluring, but he wouldn't challenge that god of death. He'd rather take his chances with the floor guardian at the 6th floor than standing in front of that Asura again.

The door opened and his manservant entered holding a clipboard.

"The regeneration of the main hall is essentially finished, apart from some furnishings that are still being made. We paid 2.7 billion to have the Bruckner expedite the process. But we expect it will take at least a month before The Boundless Heavens restores the array functionality," Ulred said.

"That's to be expected," Boje nodded. "Take out our 4th and 7th sealed treasures to solidify the main hall."

"The fourth treasure costs almost 20 billion Nexus Coins a day to keep active," the Steward reminded.

"I'll take responsibility for the cost," Boje said. "We have many guests staying with us, and we need to show some sincerity. At least until the issue with that man has been dealt with."

"Regarding that... What are your instructions?" the manservant hesitantly asked.

Boje knew there was some confusion amongst their ranks. He had immediately entered seclusion, citing a need to ponder on new insights gained from witnessing the battle. But truthfully he had just been scared and wanted to hide away in his sanctum.

It was a shame that Rasuliel had gotten himself killed, robbing Boje the chance of killing that idiot himself. The amount of trouble that guy had created for the Zethaya was inestimable. That guy was completely unknown but insanely strong. Who knew if he'd pop out of nowhere in a few thousand years as a C-Grade hegemon, destroying their strongholds one by one?

Such things happening was all too common.

Of course, he knew that he was the one to blame in the end. Rasuliel had stuffed his pockets full of rare herbs to help progress his crafts, and Boje had felt that it wouldn't be such a big deal even if he bent the Family Rules a bit to reciprocate. His mind had been muddled from the opportunity of concocting a pill with such a rare item as a base.

It would probably have been enough to progress his craft to the next level. But now it was all for naught.

But the steward asked a valid question. How should the Zethaya respond?

"Send someone with an invoice for the furnishings and the [Prajā Cherry] to the Tsarun Clan. Also indicate we're expecting an explanation as to why Rasuliel initiated a fight within our compound, even going so far as to take out a peak offensive treasure while I stood right next to him," Boje finally said.

"Certainly," Ulred nodded. "And the man who entered the tower? There have also been quite a few forces who have approached us for information regarding that man."

"There's no need to hide anything," Boje eventually said. "Tell them what we know. It's not much anyway. But keep the seal on his transformation or the battle itself."

"Certainly," Ulred agreed as he scribbled down a few notes. "All the guests and personnel have already signed contracts of secrecy. It will not leak."

"Good," Boje said. "We'll wait and see how things turn out tomorrow. Perhaps there is some way for us to turn this calamity into an opportunity."