

The Fall 474

Chapter 474: Challenged

Zac looked over at Galau, who shook his head in confusion.

"I thought they were all part of the same Empire as well, even if it was a pretty weak connection for local Kingdoms," the merchant said. "Perhaps that's only true for the Zecia sector?"

"Where is Pretty Peak now?" Zac asked, dropping the subject.

Zac was a bit surprised that the token didn't lead to Catheya's home planet, as he would have expected her to want to stay in touch. But she probably believed that he would never go to the Empire Heartlands, and felt it a waste of a token.

She couldn't know that it was a place that Zac was actually interested in visiting sooner or later, in order to find opportunities for his Draugr class. That would have to wait until he got a surefire way to hide his unique condition though. Greatest was only a D-Grade warrior after all, and Zac doubted that the bracer he made would be able to fool anyone in such a place.

Twilight Harbor sounded like an interesting place as well though, and it might serve as a safer substitute to the Empire Heartlands. Leaving one's planet while still at the F-grade was nigh-suicidal though, as any random peak E-Grade warrior might be able to kill him. He needed to reach at least a level of Strength where he could escape from a D-Grade warrior if needed.

"Lady Peak and Lady Lioress are currently resting in a neighboring room," Galau said.

"Lioress? Who's that?" Zac asked.

"I'm not sure. Her first name is Leyara. My guess is that she is a disciple of some of the hidden peak experts of the sector judging by the way others treat her," Galau said with a low voice. "They might both be able to get in contact with the Heliophos clan for you, which isn't easy from what I've heard."

"Let them wait a few seconds more," Zac said as he indicated Galau to come inside instead. "Did you hear any mentions of The Great Redeemer outside? Are the claims credible? I'm thinking that cultivator who spoke up might have been messing with me as revenge or something."

"Have you seen the man you mentioned?" Galau asked, receiving a nod in response.

"Is this him?" Galau asked, and a face along with some text appeared on a screen the next moment.

"That's him," Zac confirmed with a sigh.

It was obviously the man he had seen twice, though his age was somewhat younger compared to the real-time avatar he had conjured when breaking the beacon. It looked like he wasn't lucky this time around, and the Redeemer really was part of the karmic cultivator clan.

"Well, his real name is Vordis A'Heliophos. He is not technically part of the Heliophos clan, hence the prefix. He is presumably an illegitimate son of one of the grand elders of the family. It's said that the elder came back to the clan with a 5-year-old child after having traveled for a few centuries, and he said the boy was his son," Galau started explaining as he took out a crystal.

"It's hard to get details since it seems like a touchy subject with the clan, but apparently the boy seemed to have some unique gifts, and he was heavily nurtured even if he wasn't part of the real bloodline. But something happened and Voridis couldn't form his cultivator core, so he fell out of favor within the clan, much to his and his father's dismay.

"He got desperate, both due to his own remaining lifespan growing shorter by the day, and to prove himself to his clan again. He left the clan and came back as a D-Grade powerhouse 200 years later. However, the elders noticed something was wrong with his karma even though it was covered deep. It was eventually exposed that Voridis had used a taboo ritual that was powered by the death of millions of people," Voridis said.

"So why is he still out causing trouble if he was exposed?" Zac asked with a frown.

"His father pled for leniency, and the patriarch relented and only exiled him after crippling his cultivation and putting a karmic curse on him. They planned to let him live out his life as a mortal on a desolate planet to understand the plight of those he had killed.

A thousand years later another sacrifice was exposed, and it became soon became apparent that it was Voridis who had regained his ability to cultivate and had just reformed his Cultivation Core. That was tens of thousands of years ago, and he still hasn't been caught by his family. There are at least 4 taboo genocides linked to him. The System has handed out multiple quests for his death as well, but he is still alive," Galau narrated, clearly reading off some information packet.

"Taboo?" Zac asked. "Like unorthodox?"

"Exactly. What he's doing is going against the will of the Heavens. That man wasn't talented enough to form a core by himself, but he didn't want to risk his life in Mystic Realms in hopes of finding opportunities that could allow him to break through. Instead, he chose to sacrifice mortals to change his fate. That is one of the most taboo actions to the heavens," Galau explained.

Zac slowly nodded as he went over the information that Galau had provided. The origin of The Great Redeemer didn't change anything. The good news was that the Heliophos Clan seemed intent on dealing with their embarrassment, but the bad news was that the father seemed ready to cover for him even after all his transgressions.

It also meant that killing Voridis might cause all kinds of issues for Earth, as someone like a Grand Elder of a C-Grade Karmic Clan probably could mess with a single D-Grade planet without much effort. Perhaps focusing on making Earth harder to find rather than dealing with the man himself was really the better course of action.

There should be no cause of conflict between Earth and the Heliophos Clan if Earth simply hid away until the Great Redeemer had died or moved on.

Zac also noted that the Merchant's wealth of knowledge seemed a lot broader right now compared to his comments after the fight.

"You've been busy since we exited," Zac commented.

"Ah, well," Galau coughed. "Gathering the information was mostly done by the two misses, I am just the messenger. Incidentally, why don't we head over and say hello?"

Zac shot an even glance at the merchant, waiting for an explanation.

"Well, you know what happened with the Tsarun Clan, and then the fight as we exited. I was afraid that it might implicate my family after all, but thankfully I managed to form a connection with the Peak Family. That way I won't return to my Family like a criminal," the merchant confessed. "I'm sorry."

"Isn't knowing me enough of a boon now that the bounty is lifted?" Zac asked with confusion.

He wasn't trying to be arrogant, but he was the first person to conquer the 8th floor in an extremely long time in the sector, which no doubt hinted at him being a future powerhouse. Shouldn't such an accomplishment be worth something?

"Honestly, it's still not decided whether knowing you is a boon or a curse," Galau said with a wry smile. "It's unclear what the attitude of the Heliophos Clan and the Dravorak Dynasty will be. That will affect whether you will be seen as a murderous fugitive or a pride of the sector until you are strong enough to speak for yourself."

"I guess I overestimated myself," Zac wryly smiled. "Before we head over, can you look into a few things for me?"

"Look into?" Galau said, his interest immediately piqued. "Treasures?"

"Exactly," Zac nodded.

He had spent over an hour with Catheya, but he hadn't been completely focused on their conversation. His hand had imperceptibly moved toward the Cosmos Sacks now and then, and he glanced at its contents.

There were a lot of things missing, but there was even more remaining. For example, almost the whole dragon was left intact, apart from some scales and the messy remains he threw inside at the end. Both the massive horns and the Dragon Core were still there, which was a huge relief as they were probably worth the most of the beast.

"Do you know what this is?" Zac asked. "Be careful, it comes from an elite assassin."

Galau gingerly took the spike and turned it over as his eyes flickered with light.

"There is a liquid inside," the merchant slowly said. "That is the real treasure. The young master from Zethaya might be more knowledgeable about it."

"I'm not comfortable with exposing what I found just yet," Zac smiled. "Please keep these things to yourself as well."

"Of course," Galau hurriedly nodded.

Zac took out one item after another from his Spatial Tools, and the eyes of Galau grew even wider.

"I've never heard of items with such craftsmanship appearing in the Tower of Eternity," the merchant mumbled. "Is it a special perk of the higher floors?"

Zac wouldn't expose the fact that he had taken them off the body of an elite from another part of the universe. He was afraid that would hurt resale value in case he decided to swap them for cold hard cash instead.

It turned out that over twenty of the odd trinkets in the Mentalist's Spatial Ring were Array Breakers that could take out specific types of formations. It wasn't anything related to evolving or fighting, but rather items that were probably used to expedite the climb for the young mentalist. Galau couldn't pinpoint exactly what sort of arrays they worked against though, as that would require some experimentation.

He was a bit surprised that there were no treasures geared toward evolving among the things he had picked up from the three elites. They should all have been right at the precipice before evolving, so why weren't they preparing? Or was there perhaps no point for people like them to carry around such items, as they could simply visit their clan's storage rooms?

Galau also had no idea what the odd heads that Zac found in Faceless 9's Cosmos Sack were. He could confirm that they were some sort of unorthodox arrays that had trapped the souls of the previous owners, but he said that experimentation was the only way to know for sure what the arrays did.

It was either that or to hand them over to an array master who could slowly decipher the inscriptions on the talisman, but Zac didn't know anyone like that at the moment.

Zac could only nod with some defeat and hope that the Sky Gnome back on earth knew more even though the Thayer Consortia wasn't nearly as powerful as Galau's clan. They were however once a C-Grade merchant clan, and a lot of knowledge should remain even if they had fallen to their current pitiful state over the past centuries.

The two soon enough left the room. The Zethaya scion was actually waiting outside, and Zac already knew the results of the Alchemist's inquiries judging by his expression.

"I am afraid that there are no treasures to heal old wounds in the Base Town. Plenty of people have brought pills that can heal a recently wounded soul, such as our Zethaya's [Serene Soul Pill]. But you would normally only bring items like the [Prajñā Cherry] if you plan on selling or trading it," Boje explained with a pained expression.

"That's fine, I guessed as much," Zac sighed. "You don't happen to know a way to block out Karmic links for a whole planet?"

"Is this about the Heliophos Traitor?" Boje thoughtfully said. "It's an unusual problem. Perhaps there are arrays that can provide such an effect, but I would have to confer with a proper Array Master."

Zac nodded in thanks as the alchemist walked off again, and his eyes turned to a woman who stood in a doorway not far away. It was one of the two ladies who had snatched up Galau earlier, and judging by the trademark purple hair it was no doubt Pretty Peak.

"He's happy you're not holding a grudge," Pretty smiled. "Outliers like you are a nightmare for large clans. Come inside, and we can discuss your predicament."

Zac nodded and followed her inside where the second girl waited. She immediately stood up when he appeared, but Zac noticed that her smile looked a bit forced. Her eyes repeatedly went toward the various jewelry that decked his hands, while occasionally darting over to Galau to the side.

Had the merchant said something weird?

However, she soon snapped out of it and introduced herself as Leyara Lioress, calling herself the personal disciple of 'The Void Priestess'. That didn't mean anything to Zac, but judging by Galau's reaction it seemed as though she was a big shot in the sector, or at least in the Allbright Empire. Zac marked down the information for later before he introduced himself.

"I'm Zac, nice to meet you," Zac simply said.

"I am Pretty Peak, but you can call me Divine Fist," Pretty added from the side, drawing a blank stare from Zac.

"Don't mind her," Leyara giggled from the side as she walked closer to Zac, causing a puff of perfume to waft over. "Pretty was finally allowed to change name a year ago after forming a Mid-Grade Fragment while still in F-Grade. But she can't decide on a new name."

"Yes, I've met your cousin," Zac coughed, surprised at how much stronger she seemed to be compared to her cousin. "How is Average?"

"He's current-" Pretty began, but Zac's attention was suddenly diverted by a System Prompt that appeared in front of him.

[Lordship of Port Atwood Challenged]

"Lordship challenged?!" Zac swore out loud as he saw the prompt as he glared at the two girls, his dense killing intent started leaking a bit. "Who?"

"It's not us. Such a prompt means your Capital is being attacked," Pretty said, her equanimity slightly cracking in front of Zac's aura.

Zac immediately stood up in alarm upon hearing the news and started to walk out the door without another word.

"Wait," Pretty said from behind, and Zac looked back to see both the girls throw a Cosmos Sack over.

"We'll contact the Heliophos Clan for you," Pretty said. "We should have heard back within a month. You can read in the crystal how to contact me without exposing yourself."

"A small greeting gift from me," Leyara added as well.

"Thank you both," Zac nodded and left in a hurry to find Ogras.

"What did you give him?" Pretty asked her friend after Zac had left the room, noticing that her friend had acted a bit unnatural since Zac Piker had arrived.

"You heard the merchant's descriptions," Leyara said with a slight blush. "And you saw what he wore. Many geniuses have unique interests and tastes, and you have to adapt to circumstances."

"You didn't..." Pretty exclaimed, her eyes widening in disbelief.