

## The Fall 537

### Chapter 537: Clues

Zac couldn't help but fantasize about whether the Sky Gnome had actually got his hands on one of the four materials required for the Shipyard Upgrade. If it actually was the case, then it would most likely be the first one, the [Urgarat Flakes]. It was a very rare form of metal, but it was not nearly as rare as the other things Karunthel asked for.

As to why the metal was so rare, it was because it was not a natural element you could find in a mine, but rather something produced when a certain stone beast evolved to D-Grade. The beast was called an [Urgarat Crawler], and it was a creature that only lived on certain earth- or metal-attuned planets.

When it was ready to form its Beast Core and evolve to D-Grade it first created a thick cocoon from the materials it found in the ground. These materials were in turn transformed by the heavy Dao Fluctuations that were released from its evolution. One of the most common mutations was the [Urgarat Flakes], an extremely sturdy alloy.

It was in other words something you could only stumble upon by chance. You might be able to keep the crawlers as domesticated animals, but the value of the materials didn't make up for the cost of nurturing a beast all the way to the D-Grade, so no one wasted their time on such an unprofitable venture.

The Sky Gnome did find the second material, the [Realm Locus] in one of his large encyclopedias as well, though the information was limited. It was an organic gemstone that grew in places with a lot of spatial activity. That meant that they were mostly found inside mystic realms, and they contained a small amount of sealed space-time.

The gnome guessed that Karunthel wanted the gem in order to improve some spatial array for either a weapon or space flight. However, the supply for [Realm Locus] was even worse than that of [Urgarat Flakes], and the demand was a lot higher as things with Spatial Attunement had a lot of uses. There were no Nexus Crystals attuned with the Dao of Space in the Zecia sector either.

Those crystals only appeared at C-Grade and above, and the [Realm Locus] was one of the few D-Grade materials that could act as a substitute. It was clearly inferior to the real material, but they did not have a lot of options out in a frontier Sector.

Things only got worse from there as Calrin couldn't make heads or tails about the last two materials, and they were forced to send an inquiry to an intelligence agency at the end. That could probably only mean that they were even harder to acquire.

The quest that had seemed easy enough to complete at a first glance had quickly turned into an arduous task, and the Sky Gnome had already indicated that Zac would most likely need to find some of the materials himself. That obviously couldn't be done on Earth, but rather required him to travel to places where there was a chance of the items appearing.

But now, just a week later, Calrin was already calling for him, and Zac couldn't help but getting his hopes up. There were just 4 materials he needed to find, after all, so getting just one was a huge step in the

right direction. Of course, it was more likely that he had simply gotten the intelligence reports back than the materials themselves.

Zac still made his way to the commercial district as quickly as possible, but he couldn't help but stop and admire the massive transformation the consortia had undertaken since arriving at Earth. The huge compound had looked like a condemned city-block where not even beggars would stay before, but now domineering structures stood in front with opulent mansions hiding in the back.

There were also four shops now instead of one, each focusing on their respective wares.

The largest one sold armor and weaponry, most of it made by Port Atwood craftsmen themselves, and the second store contained miscellaneous tools for cultivators along with day-to-day items. There was everything from crude talismans to Cosmos Sacks to all sorts of tools required by non-combat classes.

The next store was natural treasures where you could buy herbs and pills, along with a limited supply of Nexus Crystals. The store also bought most sorts of herbs as well, and from what Zac heard they actually bought more than they sold. They also sold some foodstuffs in the store, though most foods were still sold in the open square by the farmers themselves.

The final store was the smallest one, but also the most exclusive. Only VIP clients of the consortia could enter, and it was the place with the most valuable items of every type. This was the store that Zac entered, and he was quickly shown to the highest floor by one of the clerks. Calrin appeared a minute later, sporting a dapper suit that no doubt was made from Spiritual Materials.

The somewhat impoverished image of the Sky Gnome was long gone, replaced by a man looking like a titan of industry. Of course, the effect was pretty limited with his diminutive size.

"Have you found one of the materials?" Zac asked without preamble.

"Alas, no," Calrin sighed. "Though I believe I will receive word from the intelligence agency soon enough."

"So why did you call me here?" Zac sighed as he sat down.

"You've put quite a few orders with me apart from the four materials, remember?" Calrin smiled as he took out a crystal. "I called you about this."

Zac accepted the crystal with some confusion and infused it with some energy.

A long list of materials appeared, followed by an in-depth guide on how to create a powder that should be applied to one's body.

"[Bone-Forging Dust]?" Zac read aloud with confusion before he looked up at the Sky Gnome. "What is this stuff?"

"It's a race improvement formula, see how the materials differ from anything else you've seen?" Calrin explained.

Zac took a second look at the materials, and something suddenly dawned on him. Not a single one of the items was a herb. It was all bones from ferocious beasts, stones, or metals. It was extremely different

from the medicinal baths that the people of Port Atwood were using, as those were almost exclusively using various herbs that they grew in the Spiritual Soil.

"It's unfortunately not a recipe for the undead. Those things are just impossible to buy it seems," Calrin sighed. "But I came across this recipe when I tried to come up with a solution for you. I believe your problems might occur because your dead body clashes with the life- and nature-attunement in the plants of a medicinal bath. But what if there's nothing like that in the mixture?"

"So you think I won't have the same reaction with this new recipe," Zac nodded in understanding.

"Even better, you possessed more than half the materials after killing beasts in all four directions, including the most annoying component to get," Calrin said before he produced a long shimmering horn. "And I have already acquired the rest."

It was the [Star Ox Horn] that Zac had left with Calrin long ago in hopes of finding some use for it. Back then it was one of the most valuable things in his possession, but it had quickly been thrown aside for far actually precious treasures like the [Pathfinder Oracle Eye] and the [Divine Investiture Array].

He had honestly forgotten about it, but it turned out it was doubly lucky he didn't sell the opportunity to Average for a measly 1 Billion Nexus Coins. It also wasn't too surprising that the horn was used for a recipe like this, as Calrin had already found out that the item was related to evolutions. Zac felt that the gnome's idea was pretty feasible, and it was definitely worth trying.

The worst thing that could happen was that he slightly poisoned himself once more, but he was already used to that.

"You should know this, though. The only reason I managed to buy a full recipe on the cheap was that it is not too impressive. It is just one notch better than the dirt-cheap concoctions we are preparing for your army, but its cost is well over a hundredfold," Calrin said. "And it is supposed to hurt pretty bad. So bad that it's actually possible to gain a few points in Endurance from using it."

"It's worth some pain if I can get the benefits from it. As for cost, it shouldn't matter either. How are we looking? Is everything unsealed and uncursed or whatever?" Zac asked.

He had waited a long time now to get a proper look at the small mountain of items he had absconded with after his massacre outside the Tower of Eternity. He had done one preliminary check just before heading over to the Undead Incursion, but he had handed over the rest of the sacks that he and Ogras had collected to the Sky Gnomes later.

The demon probably still held on to some of the benefits he had siphoned off the various scions while Zac met with Catheya, but most of the loot was in the Cosmos Sacks and Spatial rings they had taken of the bodies of the victims. However, he worried about hidden threats such as karmic links or even booby traps, something that was apparently not too uncommon, so he had hired Calrin and his ilk to cleanse them.

Truthfully, utilizing karmic links weren't all that common in the multiverse, and it was more likely for a cultivator to plant a bomb as a final act of revenge on their killer. First of all, karmic links were easy to break, with even Zac being able to break the links of a D-Grade karmic cultivator. Stronger warriors could break, or at least obscure that kind of weak links even without the help of treasures.

Secondly, normal cultivators couldn't utilize a karmic link to hunt down someone on the other side of the sector. It would take someone with a deep understanding like Voriadis A'Heliophos or his clan members to actually make use of them, or powerful forces ready to spend the money to hire a Karmic Cultivator.

Another issue apart from traps was the seals that covered a large number of the more valuable items, anti-theft devices that were put in place to disallow outsiders to steal the secrets of their clan.

"Almost all of the cultivation crystals containing manual and Skills are beyond our capabilities, but that is usually how it goes," Calrin said with a shake of his head. "They are always guarded the hardest. However, 17 of the manuals are public manuals that are commonly known in the multiverse, and those weren't sealed or were only using standard seals. The best of them is [Warrior's Heart]. It's an unattuned manual that can only take you to Peak E-Grade if you're lucky, but the bonus to combat power and recovery is impressive."

"It's meant for armies?" Zac asked, immediately understanding the use of the thing.

"Exactly. It's made for armies using traditional weaponry. I've heard that it is a simplification of a much better manual, but I don't know if that's true. In either case, it is very popular in the Zecia sector, and you've gathered four versions of it," the sky gnome said.

"Four versions of the same manual?" Zac asked with confusion.

"Some forces modify manuals to better suit their inheritance or what weapons they enjoy. Others manage to make some adjustments to increase the power output or recovery by some degree," Calrin explained. "You can classify a manual from being from Low Grade to Peak Grade. The original manual is a Mid E-Grade cultivation manual, but I'd say that one of the versions you got is almost High Grade. It must have belonged to a pretty powerful clan who exerted a lot of effort in improving it before."

"What do you recommend doing with manuals like that?" Zac asked.

"Sell the worse duplicates, keep one or two of the best ones for yourself," Calrin said. "You could either sell them through me or wait for the Auction you're planning on holding. I would say you stand to gain more by selling them here on Earth. There should be a lack of manuals of this kind on Earth, while they are ultimately very common in the multiverse. Besides, that way you would know what manuals your competition is cultivating."

"We'll add them to the Auction then," Zac agreed. "What about the rest?"

"It's too much to go over one by one," Calrin said with an avaricious glint in his eyes as he took out another crystal. "We created a tally for you. Incidentally, the cost of unsealing all these treasures landed at 1 Billion Nexus Coins."