

The Fall 684

Chapter 684: Guide

"It is quite a sight," a sultry voice commented to Zac's side, dragging him out of his reverie.

"Dreamers living among our people. I didn't believe my master when he told me," Zac said with a snort as he turned toward the source of the voice.

It was a Revenant, seemingly a human with a bit of demonic heritage. She didn't have any horns, but her hands were a bit clawed and her skin had a thin pattern reminiscent of that of the Torrid Demons. She wore a tightfitting dress that looked more like an evening gown than a cultivator's attire, but she did emit the aura of someone at early E-Grade.

He couldn't tell whether she was a turned Revenant or if she was a natural-born undead of peak E-Grade warriors, but he guessed the latter was more common in an established place like this.

"Is young master perchance an Imperial?" the Revenant asked, and her eyes lit up when Zac slightly nodded.

He had already decided to go under the guise as a random scion of an imperial Draugr-clan after hearing the introduction from the Corpse-lord guard earlier. It felt like the safest bet, considering he still didn't know if there were actual pureblood Draugr native to a place like this.

"May I ask if young master requires a guide? I am a native to Twilight Harbor and know all the outs and inns. I can make myself available for as long as master needs, and I'm sure young Master will be satisfied by my... services."

The Revenant was a professional guide, just as Zac assumed. It was a pretty common way for cultivators to make some extra money, especially among the weaker cultivators who were afraid to risk their lives in Mystic Realms or hunting grounds. A glance around the square showed that there were over a thousand teleportation stations just like the one he arrived in, and there was a small group of cultivators waiting outside all of them.

The voluptuous Revenant wasn't the only one waiting outside the station where Zac appeared, there were actually six more undead guides. There were also 5 living ones; three humans, a treant, and a beastkin. However, none of the living had approached Zac when he appeared, and Zac guessed there were unspoken rules at play here.

"Ah, Triskatal is a decent bedwarmer, but her connections are lacking. Young master strikes me as a man with great purpose who has better things to do than to waste with a mere female. I have connections with two information houses, and I can provide far more detailed accounts of events and noteworthy persons in Twilight Harbor," a Corpse-lord said as he donned a terrifying smile, though Zac guessed he was trying to look amiable.

The Revenant threw the competition an infuriated glance, but she didn't have time to for a rebuttal before another guide spoke up, detailing the perks of hiring them. It almost turned into a brawl, leading Zac to believe there was a surplus of guides compared to visitors. However, Zac's curiosity was piqued as one of the guides stood silent.

It wasn't that she was above competing with the others, she just lacked presence. She tried to speak up a few times, but she was quickly shot down, seemingly unable to shamelessly boast with such gusto. Of course, that wasn't really why he was curious.

"Ah, don't mind that lass. She's a novice, and she was fired by her last employer," the Triskatal said when she noticed Zac's look. "She actually has the nerve to charge 50 E-grade Nexus Coins a day as well, as though she is a senior guide."

"You are Draugr?" Zac asked, ignoring the comment.

Zac couldn't stop some hesitation from seeping into his voice as he asked though, since she looked a bit different from himself or Catheya. Her eyes were black orbs just like his own, but they were matte and void of the abyssal feeling that Draugr eyes naturally possessed. She also had a few traits not normally associated with Draugr, such as slightly pointy ears and an odd vertical ridge in her forehead.

"I wouldn't dare," the young girl said with a bow. "There happens to be some divine blood in my ancestry. But I am not part of the Draugr-clans living in Twilight Harbor. You can consider me a normal Revenant."

"Hmm," Zac said.

He was quite relieved by her words. It had been a bit of a gamble to seal his Specialty Core in his undead state since he didn't know what kind of reactions his Draugr heritage would create in a place like this. But between how common it seemed to be for 'Imperials' to come here, and the fact that there was actual Draugr-clans present, it looked like his appearance wouldn't create any waves.

Part of him wanted to stay under the radar as he went about his businesses, but his experiences in Base Town and his subsequent experiences had imparted him with some valuable knowledge. Being too inconspicuous would only result in you getting discriminated against and losing out on important opportunities.

If anything, trying to lay low increased the odds of you getting in trouble with people with strong backgrounds, as no one would miss a dead wandering cultivator. Meanwhile, his Draugr appearance essentially made him a VIP by birthright, and people wouldn't randomly move against him out of fear of whatever clan backed him. In fact, even the local clans would speak up for him if it came to it, as the nobility of the five races couldn't be impugned.

Of course, the goal was to strike a balance. Going too far in posturing would just make you a target, like the Eveningtide Asura or Yrial.

"A- I, I have information connections as well!" the half-blood Draugr hurriedly said when Zac didn't speak up again. "My father is a fact-checker for a local intelligence merchant. I am up to date to all the latest events!"

"Why were you fired by your last employer?" Vilari asked as she understood Zac was interested.

"I don't provide... those... kinds of services," the girl said as her eyes darted toward the Revenant called Triskatal. "The employer thought it was implied because of the price."

“Good, I’ll hire you. Let’s start with one week and take it from there,” Zac nodded as he took off his mask, his appearance creating some waves among the congregated guides.

“Pureblood,” one of the Revenants whispered with a mix of dejection and envy, and the other guides sighed and walked away.

They might have been willing to compete for the assignment before, but they gave up when they saw Zac’s abyssal eyes. The noble races tended to stay with their own, and a half-blood Draugr was obviously better than a normal Revenant.

“I’m Nala. Thank you for giving me this opportunity. Where do young master wish to go?” Nala asked, clearly having some trouble looking into Zac’s eyes. Perhaps she felt a bit pressured by speaking with a proper pureblood Draugr.

“I’m in no hurry, take us to some interesting places,” Zac said with a smile. “It’s not often I get to leave the clan.”

“Ah, if young master wishes to relieve stress during his stay, I am always available to accompany you. I also have connections with various Flower Houses. Someone with your grand heritage would be welcomed with the utmost of service,” Triskatal hurriedly said as Zac started walking away.

A communication crystal flew up from between her breasts the next moment, making its way toward Zac. However, the crystal disintegrated as Vilari sent a spiritual wave at it, making the Revenant grimace.

“That won’t be necessary,” Zac said as he walked away with Vilari silently walking in tow.

Zac emitted the aura of a Peak-E Grade warrior, but he was still just in the middle stages and his body was still solely powered by the black ichor sitting in his veins. Of course, Triv had actually divulged that there were compounds that could temporarily awaken one’s body, not only making amorous encounters but even pregnancy possible.

However, those kinds of zombie erection pills left behind quite a bit of pill poison, and indulging too much in them could even harm one’s foundations.

“If the young master wishes to take in the sights of Twilight Harbor, how about a boat ride between the plateaus?” Nala ventured.

“Sounds good,” Zac shrugged.

“The Twilight Harbor uses special vessels that are powered by the Twilight Clouds between the islands. I have a vessel,” Nala said as she took out a decent-looking flying treasure. “I borrowed my family’s ship. It is a bit low-end, there are better ones for rent as well.”

“This one is fine, as long as it flies,” Zac shrugged as he walked aboard.

Vilari gave the square a last look before she walked over and sat down next to Zac. Nala hurriedly jumped on as well, instructing the small vessel to lift off. The ship rose from the platform, and Zac realized it wasn’t actually covered by a barrier. Even then, he definitely felt he was inside a proper atmosphere, making him believe the whole harbor was covered in a massive atmospheric bubble.

The mysterious clouds didn't seem to be able to reach the platforms though, but they rather formed what looked like rivers of stardust between the various islands. There were two separate types of rivers. One was the familiar cold aquamarine of Miasma, while the other was a much warmer yellow river.

It was clear that the rivers stemmed from the anomaly in the center of the Twilight Harbor, but Zac was interested to note that the anomaly was neither aquamarine nor yellow, nor a mix of them. It rather was rather a murky gold that rather leaned toward green, and it didn't change whether it emitted the feeling of life or death.

Nala steered the flying vessel to float on top of one of the miasmatic rivers, Zac could feel that it actually helped the ship pick up speed. However, they only moved for a few thousand meters before the ship slowed down until it came to a crawl.

"What's wrong?" Zac asked.

"I, ah, haven't really given any tours so far, so I was trying to map out a good route," Nala said with embarrassment.

"That's fine, that's partly was why I hired you," Zac laughed.

Zac wasn't lying. Some things didn't change even when comparing pre-integration Earth and the Multiverse. The guides in metropolises like this were very much like the tourist guides back home. They would take you to all kinds of stores where they had "connections" where their business partners waited to sell you low-quality items at a premium.

A greenhorn was more likely to bring him to proper establishments since she hadn't had time to build that kind of seedy network, and with her Father's connections, Zac believed she should have a good understanding of the comings and goings of this place.

"How about this, take me to some place where I can sit down and enjoy some incense for an hour or two. I don't want any of those kinds of services, just a calm environment for us to stabilize after a long teleportation," Zac said, noting that Vilari's aura was still a bit unstable.

"Certainly! There is a highly reputable Incencary run by the Sharva'Zi Clan not far from here. It provides a great view of the Twilight Ocean as well. I believe it would be up to young master's requirements,"

"The Sharva'Zi family?!" Zac blurted with surprise, but he quickly reigned in himself. "Do you know if anyone of them are here?"

"That is beyond me. Perhaps some have come for the Twilight Ascent, but the imperial clans usually only have a few branch members stationed here to run their businesses," Nala said, clearly trying to avoid reading into Zac's reaction. "Most of those who work there are natives."

Zac finally understood what had brought Catheya here while traveling with her master. It sounded like she had stopped by to look into their interests before moving on. Meeting Catheya was not something he had planned, but he also was a bit curious if she was here. He guessed it depended on whether her master had emerged from his seclusion back in the Zecia sector.

He had a completely different aura while undead and a new appearance with the help of [Million Faces] to make him look more like a natural Draugr, and Catheya shouldn't be able to recognize him even if

they came face to face. He also had one simple thing working for him; the fact that it was so ludicrous that someone could be both a Draugr and a Human that no one would even think of such a possibility.

But even then, there was no point in playing with fire.

"I am here incognito under my master's orders, and I don't want to make my presence known. I think it's best if we visit another establishment," Zac slowly said.

"Certainly, I know of many more such establishments," Nala quickly nodded. "Millions of people have come here for the Twilight Ascent, and many are using temporary identities. After all, when there are benefits there will be competition, and no one wants to bring grudges back to their clans."

"Good," Zac nodded.

The boat moved slowly toward a plateau two disks over, and it was clearly controlled by the undead. Occasionally, Nala would have the flying vessel fly over to another river heading in the right direction, and she rarely flew through the void itself. Zac first felt they were moving quite slowly along the energy rivers, but he soon realized that the speed was deceptive.

They passed a whole disk in just thirty minutes, and even the smallest disks were dozens of times larger than his island back home. The one they had passed was large as well, and he had seen whole mountain ranges flash by in minutes. That meant Nala's dingy flying treasure was actually flying more than ten times as fast as his own leaf, something that was hard to believe considering the guide's apparent economic situation along with her strength.

"The leading clans have installed special arrays in Twilight Harbor," Nala explained as she looked down on her flying treasure with some embarrassment. "This treasure is just average as young master guessed, but space is shrunk a hundred times along these Twilight rivers, allowing for easier travel between world disks. There are teleporters as well, but outsiders cannot use them."

"I'm surprised to see these kinds of arrangements in a frontier sector," Vilari said to hide Zac's ignorance.

"It is because a lot of the factions here have powerful backings from elsewhere. Their economic background can't be compared to normal local factions in a frontier sector. The Twilight Ocean is what truly makes it possible though since it unceasingly expels energy into the area," Nala said and pointed to a glowing object beneath them.

"How about you introduce this place to me? My master simply handed me a Teleportation Token and told me there would be opportunities in a place called Twilight Harbor, but he didn't say much else," Zac said. "What's the Twilight Ocean?"

"Ah, so it's like that," Nala said with surprise. "The sphere down there is the Twilight Ocean, or rather the entrance to it. It's closed right now, but it is still discharging enormous amounts of Miasma and Cosmic Energy. That's the whole basis of Twilight Harbor."

Zac hummed in understanding, a bit surprised to hear that the star itself was the ocean. He had just assumed it was the nebulous clouds and the Twilight Rivers were the oceans, and the platforms the harbor.

“Is that star why this place holds mixed races?”

“Yes,” Nala said. “The Twilight Ocean expels both life- and death-attuned energies, and unless both sides are present to absorb it, then the atmosphere will slowly become imbalanced.”

“What is the Twilight Ocean?” Zac asked curiously. “A mystic realm? Or an aberrant star?”

“It is a supreme grade Mystic Realm from what I have heard, and the place where the Twilight Ascent is being held. The Twilight Lord founded this place, and his descendant is still officially in charge of the ocean,” Nala said before she lowered her voice. “Of course, many of the ancient clans have great influence in this place, with the current generation Twilight Lord mainly focusing on his cultivation. He hasn’t actually been seen for almost a thirty thousand years now, and many think he is preparing to assault Peak C-Grade.”

Zac was about to ask some more questions, but they had almost reached their destination by that point - one of the world disks that had to be the home of billions of cultivators.