

## Hammer God 320

### Chapter 320 Scammed

The mood in the room turned sour. Well, sourer. It was already quite sour.

"Representative," the leading Sorcerer spoke with a serious tone. "Please, keep your escort in check. His words could be considered slander."

Kyle smiled sheepishly. "Excuse my partner," he said before turning to Bonk. "Bonk, this is not a scam. It is a trade."

"Trade is scam," Bonk said. "Too much Sorcerer. Never need Sorcerer."

Kyle carefully pulled the crumpled agreement out of Bonk's hands and looked at it.

"While I do not agree with your choice of words, you are right. Ten required commissions per week is a bit much," Kyle said.

The Sorcerers looked even angrier.

They had only received a quick apology for something this disrespectful.

"This agreement is already our final offer," the leading Sorcerer spoke. "As long as you agree, we will be working with you for the next year."

"Mind if I read through it?" Kyle asked.

"Go ahead," the leading Sorcerer spoke with a bit of annoyance in his tone.

Kyle carefully, deliberately, and very slowly read through the agreement.

"I'm sorry, but as the agreement stands, I can't accept it," Kyle said with a polite smile.

The Sorcerers had already expected something like this.

"We have already made concessions to expedite this negotiation," one of the Sorcerers said. "We know that this agreement is more than acceptable."

Kyle smoothed the paper and politely pushed it into the middle of the table again.

"I thank you for your efforts, but the Stark Brotherhood can't afford this," he said.

Then, he stood up.

"Do you need something, representative?" one of the Sorcerers asked with a raised brow as he watched Kyle standing up.

"No, I can find the door on my own," Kyle said.

"You are leaving?" the leading Sorcerer asked with genuine surprise.

"Yes," Kyle said. "You said this was your final offer, and we can't accept it. Since this is your final offer and we couldn't reach an agreement, there is no reason to prolong this negotiation."

The three Sorcerers narrowed their eyes.

One of the Sorcerers leaned into the leading Sorcerer and whispered something into his ear.

"Please, wait a moment," the leading Sorcerer said.

"Yes?" Kyle asked.

"I've just heard that we can drop the price by another 10%. Would you be willing to renegotiate?" the leading Sorcerer asked.

"Thank you for your efforts," Kyle said, "but the price is fine. That was not why we can't afford it."

"Is there anything specific you'd like changed?" the leading Sorcerer asked.

"Well, as my partner so eloquently put it, the minimum commissions are too high," Kyle said. "We can afford hiring five Sorcerers per week for the original price, but we can't afford ten."

Kyle shrugged with a sheepish smile. "We simply don't need that many."

"Representative," the leading Sorcerer spoke carefully. "With all due respect, but the original fee without an agreement is 2.5 times higher. We are lowering the price considerably for you, but we also need to make some money."

"That's all well and good," Kyle said, "but we simply don't need that many. Just because we can afford five doesn't mean that we need five."

The Sorcerers grew noticeably annoyed.

Usually, during negotiations like this, both sides said that they couldn't afford more. Then, one side said that they could make some concessions before the other side agreed to concessions of their own.

Yet, Kyle was not budging.

This did not follow the rules of how negotiations were performed.

"Representative, we are willing to be flexible, but if you can't meet us halfway, we can't get to an agreement," the leading Sorcerer said.

"There is no halfway," Kyle said with a shrug. "I am standing on the edge of a cliff. If I meet you halfway, I will fall."

"We can afford five. This is not some kind of tactic or euphemism. We literally can only afford five. I can't suddenly afford six just because I want to."

The leading Sorcerer looked at Kyle with annoyance and skepticism. "The mighty Stark Brotherhood can't afford 25 Ether Stones per week?"

"I mean, we have the liquidity," Kyle said, "but we are both businesses. You can probably also afford giving us a hundred missions within the next week, but you wouldn't do that."

"After all, we all want to make a profit. With an agreement, both parties benefit."

Kyle sighed. "Sadly, as it stands now, we can't make a profit with this agreement."

The Sorcerers narrowed their eyes.

This stubborn mule was not moving an inch!

If they were more impulsive, the Sorcerers would have already thrown Kyle out just because of his disrespectful attitude and stubbornness.

However, these were experienced businesspeople, and they had their emotions under control.

The Sorcerers threw some glances at each other.

Soft tactics and negotiation didn't work.

This meant that they had to get a bit more direct.

They looked at Kyle with narrowed eyes.

Meanwhile, Kyle just acted like he didn't notice the shifting atmosphere.

"Representative," the leading Sorcerer said with a darker tone. "You might be unfamiliar with how business is conducted between Guilds. This does not only involve profits. Are you aware of that?"

"Our Guild represents a certain amount of soft power, and we treat our business partners very well. While the profits might not be the best, the soft power you gain is worth it."

The atmosphere became way heavier.

"Do you understand what I mean?" the leading Sorcerer asked very slowly.

The three Sorcerers were slowly releasing their Momentum in a threatening manner.

Kyle's mind was calm, but his instincts still screamed at him.

These were three Peak Sorcerers, and they had fought many people before.

"Rude!"

The flow of pressure in the room seemed to turn around as Bonk shouted with annoyance.

"Momentum is rude!" Bonk shouted as he pulled out his shield. "You battle?! You fight?!"

The Sorcerers became nervous, and their Momentum immediately pulled back.

"Representative! Control your partner!" the leading Sorcerer shouted.

"Bonk, calm down," Kyle said with a smile.

Bonk looked at the Sorcerers before putting his shield back.

The Sorcerers released deep breaths.

If Kyle had threatened them, they wouldn't be worried.

Even if Kyle were stronger than Bonk, they wouldn't be worried.

After all, Kyle was not dumb. He knew that he couldn't just kill the three of them.

But this dwarf?

This dwarf was an idiot!

He might actually attack!

'And that's why I have Bonk,' Kyle thought with satisfaction. "I understand what you mean," Kyle said, answering their earlier question about soft power. "It is true that soft power has a certain unique use, and that's why I said we can afford five Sorcerers."

"The fact is, we do not need five Sorcerers. We need two or three, at most. Sometimes, we don't even need a single one. By agreeing to take five, I am already paying more than I need to. I have already included the soft power into my offer."

The Sorcerers grew a bit angry, but they didn't dare to release their Momentum again.

"You believe the Ancient Bark Guild's power is only worth this little?" one of the other Sorcerers asked with an offended tone.

"Of course not," Kyle said. "You have several Peak Sorcerers and even a Grand Sorcerer. Naturally, the Ancient Bark Guild is worth much, much more."

"However, the indirect benefits you can bring to the Stark Brotherhood with this agreement are not representative of your true power. It doesn't matter if a normal person or a Royal Knight lifts something weighing ten kilograms for us. In both cases, they only lift ten kilograms. The Royal Knight could lift much more, but what's the difference if they don't?"

The Sorcerers furrowed their brows.

The metaphor was a bit strange, but they knew what Kyle meant.

"What do you have in mind?" the leading Sorcerer asked.

"Increase the price by 75% of what was agreed, but remove the minimum required commissions," Kyle said.

"Impossible," the leading Sorcerer said. "In that case, we would only be lowering the price without any benefits."

"Not entirely," Kyle said. "Due to the lowered price, choosing another Sorcerer Guild would not be as profitable. This means you will be the sole supplier for all of our Sorcerer needs."

The mood of the leading Sorcerer improved a slight bit, but not by much.

"That is valuable, but only in theory. In practice, there are no other equivalent Sorcerer Guilds near your territory."

"No equivalent," Kyle said. "However, there are a couple of weaker ones."

The leading Sorcerer furrowed his brows. "You would consider hiring them?"

"Why not?" Kyle asked. "They deliver the same service for cheaper. If we ever need a more capable Sorcerer, we can commission you via the traditional route."

The three Sorcerers looked at each other.

This was actually not such a bad idea.

Better Sorcerers cost way more money.

A Peak Sorcerer cost almost ten times as much as an Initial Sorcerer.

Peak Sorcerers were needed occasionally, and the increased price could make up for the lack of individual commissions.

The Sorcerers threw several looks at each other.

"That could work, but it would have to be an increase of 100%, which means a base price of 80%," the leading Sorcerer said.

"The other guilds cost a bit less," Kyle said.

The leading Sorcerer narrowed his eyes.

"But I believe I can accept," Kyle said.

The mood improved.

"If you reduce it to 75% of the base price, which means an increase of the agreed price to 87.5%."

The mood dampened.

"Representative, that is a bit low," the leading Sorcerer said.

Kyle shrugged. "You told me to meet you in the middle. I said 75%. You said 100%. So, 87.5%, it is."

The Sorcerers had several complaints about that, but they didn't voice any.

"Fine," the leading Sorcerer said. "We can do 75% of the base price."

Kyle smiled brightly. "Happy that we could come to an agreement," he said as he finally sat down again.

The leading Sorcerer closed his eyes and took a deep breath before turning to the Sorcerer to the right of him.

"Could you?" he asked.

The other Sorcerer knew what he meant and left the room.

Two minutes later, he came back with a brand-new agreement.

Both sides read through it before signing.

Kyle took his copy and stood up with a smile. "Thank you. The Stark Brotherhood is looking forward to working with you."

The leading Sorcerer put on a fake smile. "We're looking forward to our continued cooperation."

After some pleasantries, Kyle left with Bonk.

When Kyle and Bonk left the town, a sneer appeared on Kyle's face.

'Fucking idiots,' he thought.

'You're not going to see a single fucking Ether Pebble from us within the next year.'

'Thank you for letting us keep this territory for another year for fucking free.'

Naturally, Kyle had already prepared for such an outcome.

In the past days, he had taken a look at the old agreement, and he noticed that the minimum number of commissions was draining their finances.

It was not a huge loss, but it was also not negligible.

Kyle's entire goal had been to get rid of that clause.

What about the other Sorcerer Guilds?

They also wouldn't see any money.

Why would they need Sorcerers?

They had Michael!

Even more, Michael had some connections with other Sorcerers.

'Michael can fulfill 80% of our Sorcerer needs, and even if he doesn't have the necessary Spells for the remaining 20%, he can just forward his request to one of his friends.'

'Working with Sorcerer Guilds is a waste of money. We don't need Sorcerer Guilds. We need Sorcerers.'

'Might as well let Michael create a small agency.'

'Why pay an entire fucking organization with all their administrators, lawyers, and accountants when you can simply get a freelancer?'

In essence, Kyle had gotten the territory for free.

Of course, as more time would pass, the Ancient Bark Guild would notice what was going on, and they would be quite annoyed.

Chances were that the territory would switch places next year.

But that wouldn't matter a lot.

Sure, they wouldn't get as many missions anymore, but that wouldn't be an issue.

The unneeded Fighters in the outposts in this territory could just switch to headquarters.

In exchange, headquarters just wouldn't recruit any new Fighters for a while.

In the short term, their expenditures had dropped.

But in the long term, their revenue would drop in exchange.

Yet, Kyle already had a plan on how to deal with that.

'Diversify income streams,' Kyle thought as he looked at the deed to his mine.

'You think you have control over this entire area?' Kyle thought with a snort.

'Let's see if that holds true when we are suddenly 20% cheaper than all the other Three-Weapons Guilds.'