

The Fall 284

Chapter 284: Beauty and Brawn

"Now you want to make me your disciple?" Zac asked with hesitation since the situation seemed a bit fishy. "I thought I was too ugly? Also, I'm not really interested in kneeling."

"Well, you are a bit ugly, but I'll make an exception. A supertrash that's also a progenitor and having two classes through a variant core? It's too interesting to pass up," the Lord of Cycles said with excitement. "And the kneeling is just figurative, though there is one thing you need to do to become my disciple."

Zac frowned at the explanation. It almost sounded like the Lord of Cycles wanted to take him as a disciple as a novelty. But he was long dead, so why did he bother about these things? And what would a shady person like Yrial have him do to become a disciple?

There had been too much new information in too short a time. He didn't even know if Yrial was telling the truth about his aptitude, and there was no way for him to double-check. But something inside him was telling him that he wasn't lying, and his mind immediately went to his mother.

Was this what she had done to him? Or was this simply the constitution of a technocrat, someone who hated the system. Various emotions flitted through his mind as he tried to fathom why she would do something like this. Kenzie's AI he could understand, even if it put her in extreme danger. It would undoubtedly help her get further on the road of cultivation than if she didn't possess it.

But why would Leandra want to give him an awful constitution like this?

"Let's just say I'm taking a chance here. I only have one shot unless I set up another trial ground after I made this place. Your combination of unique traits might lead nowhere, but it might also turn into something amazing. So if you make it big, remember to resurrect me," Yrial suddenly added, perhaps afraid the silence was due to Zac not wanting to become a disciple.

"Resurrect?" Zac gaped. "Is that even possible?"

"As long as you reach the peak of cultivation you can resurrect people as long as you possess a piece of their original soul or at least know where they died. Luckily I am such a piece," The Lord of Cycles nodded. "Though from what I've heard it is extremely taxing, so even the most powerful people in the multiverse can only do it a handful of times."

"Resurrection and immortality are two of the most common reasons people push themselves toward the peak. Who doesn't have friends and loved ones who have fallen? This only becomes more poignant as you get stronger and the millennia pass," Yrial sighed. "Some of my companions fell to battle, others due to old age since they got stuck and couldn't progress. The road of cultivation is paved with not only the bones of your enemies but also your loved ones."

"The only reason this place was created was that I needed Brazla to create a specialized item that I required for an expedition into an unexplored B-Grade Mystic Realm. Since I never came back to update this place I am guessing I died inside," he said with surprising equanimity. "Such is fate when defying the heavens. Anyone can die at any time."

Zac's thoughts immediately went to his father. Was it actually possible to bring him back if he got powerful enough? Or if he got stuck due to being a mortal, then perhaps Kenzie could do it.

"Of course, even with your odd advantages reaching even B-Grade is a dream within a dream, so don't start planning who to resurrect just yet," Yrial added with some disdain, clearly understanding what Zac was thinking about.

"Why should I accept you as a master though?" Zac hesitantly said. "What benefits do I get apart from just getting the inheritance treasures?"

"If you decide to only become an inheritor I'll just throw some treasure at you and then kick you out. Since I'll be pretty pissed off the treasure might not be too exciting," the spirit said without an inkling of shame. "But if you become my disciple I'll go above and beyond to help you each time you enter here. I'll not only help you progress, but I'll also give you the best treasures I've got stocked here."

Zac looked at the spirit with some helplessness as he knew that he couldn't say no to such an offer, even if there were some hidden considerations behind Yrial's offer. Getting the guidance of a C-Grade powerhouse was something extremely valuable for someone like him. But he didn't immediately say yes since he did have other considerations.

"There is a rogue cultivator believed to be at Peak D-Grade heading toward my homeworld to enslave it. Are you able to help out against that?" tentatively asked.

"I can kill him for you if you manage to get him inside here. D-Grade warriors have only taken the first step on cultivation, it's nothing I can't handle even in this limited form. But I don't see how it's possible for you to bring him here," the spirit said with an unconcerned shrug. "So you would better off putting me and the repository in a portable mansion and fleeing to another planet."

Zac sighed in disappointment, but it was worth a try.

"I plan to find a force in the multiverse that can protect my planet from that man. Would that conflict with becoming your disciple?" Zac asked next

"Of course not, most walking on the path of cultivation will have many teachers and benefactors throughout their lives. There's no point in trying to reinvent the wheel all by yourself. Some puritans think that taking pointers from others would impact their path of cultivation, but that's only true if their path is fragile and built on unstable foundations," Yrial said.

"But you should also be ready that you might not be as sought after as you hope without exposing your secrets," the Lord of Cycles added. "Taking someone on as a disciple is a huge risk and a drain on resources. Both the risk and the drain is multiplied hundredfold when you're a mortal. Bringing a mortal to the D-Grade can bankrupt a sect, and that's just the start."

"So I should display my core?" Zac probed.

"I wouldn't recommend it. Between your odd body and your variation core, you would be lucky to last for a month before someone decided to cut you open. Your situation might not be very interesting for peak existences, but it would certainly be even for some C-Grade beings. If I wasn't dead would already have cut you open to study that core," Yrial said.

"You'd really do something like that?" Zac asked with shock.

"That's nothing. You don't understand how hard it is to progress after the D-Grade. You can spend thousands of years without being able to take a single step forward. If your unique constitution even gave me a minuscule chance of advancing I'd rip you apart in a heartbeat. Those lofty existences from elite families wouldn't be any different either, even if they pretend otherwise," Yrial said.

Cold sweat started to run down Zac's back when he saw the ruthless determination within Yrial's eyes, and it reminded him of the stark reality. Might made right in this world, and he was wrong to consider people like The Great Redeemer as crazy outliers. There were innumerable people who were ready to do anything to progress on their path of cultivation.

"In any case, what do I need to do to become your disciple?" Zac said, eager to change the subject from his dismemberment.

"Just a small test. I admit I slightly phoned in the trial for the trial. I mean I simply bought and modified a Dao Golem. But in my defense, I did not really want to do this thing so I was annoyed," Yrial said with a straight face. "But I did put in another small test in case I actually found someone acceptable to take on as a disciple."

"Weren't you already ready to accept me?" Zac hesitantly asked. "Is there really a need for another trial?"

"Well, perhaps not if I was still alive, but I am a construct now," Yrial snickered. "I am created by a set of rules that I cannot bend. To become a disciple you must pass my test for disciples. Don't worry, seeing your strength you should survive. Though I admit the trial tests not only your brawn but also your beauty, which might be a problem for you."

Alarms started to go off in Zac's mind, and he quickly turned around to run away. The trial for discipleship sounded extremely suspicious, and he wanted no part of it. Especially when he mentioned the risk of death.

"Na?ve," the Lord of Cycles simply laughed, and with a wave of his arm Zac was lifted up and brought back to where he stood earlier.

"No, wait!" Zac shouted, but it was too late, as an odd wave was released from an amulet around Yrial's neck.

Zac helplessly glared at the man waving him goodbye from his spot by the pond until the scenery started to blur around him. Were all old ghosts scammers in the end?

Zac didn't have time to complain over the similarly shady methods of Anzonil and Yrial as the odd pressure continued to build up in his mind. He had already realized that he was being put inside a dreamscape or an illusion so that the trial wouldn't take place in reality. Zac tried to resist the growing confusion with all his might, even activating [Mental Fortress].

But the might of the illusion wrought by a C-Grade powerhouse wasn't something he could resist, and his defensive skill was effortlessly broken through by whatever Yrial did. Ceaseless information was crammed into his mind, and he realized it was memories from when Yrial was young. There was a flood

of impressions and sights, and Zac started to become unsure who he even was until he finally blacked out.

Zac shook his head with a groan before looking around to see where he was. He was currently sitting at a camp in a forest, though the trees were a bit different from anything he had seen on earth. It was the middle of winter, and the barren trees were covered in a layer of snow. However, he didn't move, and instead tried to sort out the new information in his head.

The confusion he felt during the impartment had abated, and he knew that he was Zac and that he was inside a dream trial for discipleship. Nothing he saw around him was actually real. But the problem was the parting words of Yrial. Even though this place an illusion it appeared there was a distinct risk of death.

The place he found himself in was modeled after a real place, and it was the homeworld of The Lord of Cycles. The forest around him had no name, and it was simply part of the untamed wilderness that spanned between the established influences in the area.

Zac quickly opened up his status screen, and it was with some relief that he found that all his attributes and skills were intact. [Verun's Bite] was also by his side, though his own Cosmos Sack had been replaced by a much worse one with only some simple necessities and a few Nexus Crystals inside.

Zac wasn't too worried though since he believed that the object was to finish the trial without the assistance of his vast wealth. He had to admit that he had taken a shortcut with the Unholy Beacon, and Yrial perhaps didn't want such a thing to happen again. His real Cosmos Sack was no doubt still with his real body inside the trail.

He was also curious to note that he had gotten an actual quest this time around, rather than just being thrown into the ring against the Life-Death construct. Even the type of quest was new, meaning discipleship might not be something as simple as a verbal agreement between two people.

Fire and Ice (Unique, Discipleship): Acquire a Profound Yin Orchid and a Ruby of Everlasting Yang.
Reward: Discipleship of The Lord of Cycles. (0/2). Remaining: 04:23:58:23

Zac blanked out for a second as he looked at the quest. He had no clue what those two things were, but he soon found them inside the added memories from Yrial's youth. And the more he looked through the memories the worse his face got. How the hell was he supposed to finish this quest?

It truly was a test of beauty and brawn.