

The Fall 295

Chapter 295: Perusing the Library

"Aren't you the same?" Zac smiled. "I heard you went out hunting during the night? Isn't Billy with you?"

"With you gaining so many levels I can't relax," she said with some annoyance, though Zac knew she didn't really mean it. "Besides, it seems the beasts are getting more aggressive."

"Billy won't be joining us today. He heard we were going to the library and decided to sleep in. Did you know he can cultivate while sleeping?" she then added as she looked inside the cultivation chamber with a slightly confused look.

Zac guessed she sensed the odd mixture of attuned energies inside since they hadn't completely dissipated, and he hurriedly closed the door behind him. It was only after he got out he had time to digest what she said. Zac didn't know how to respond to something like that, he had never heard of anything like it. Billy was truly one of a kind.

"Is that even possible?" Zac said.

"Apparently," Thea said with a shrug. "Between you and me, I think Billy might have some special constitution or bloodline. Even I could see his huge form when he smashed the array back in the hunt."

Zac agreed with Thea's guess, remembering Billy's golden blood and the ancient aura he emitted in his titanic form. Bloodlines and special constitutions were things that Zac still was a bit confused about though. Could one just gain them willy-nilly?

"Give me a second to change," Zac said and hurried to the bathroom.

He felt a bit silly wearing the golden robes from Tyrbat back on Earth. It was one thing back on Port Atwood since he was usually alone cultivating or battling, but it was different here. He took a quick shower and put on his new Spirit Tool robes instead.

The clothes adjusted to fit him perfectly, and they felt extremely luxuriant. After checking himself in the mirror he had to say that he looked a lot better in the tasteful battle robes compared to the gaudy defensive suit the Medhin Royals seemed to prefer.

Zac even considered growing out the stubble on his head to a longer hairstyle like Yrial, but in the end decided against it before he got out. Thea gave him a once-over with her eyes, her brows rising slightly when she saw the intricate fractals drawn in red and blue.

"Looks nice. I still have the things I owe you, but space here is a bit cramped," she said and led him out toward a garden out back.

The two kept making some small talk while they walked until they reached a secluded garden behind the huge mansion. The moment they arrived Thea immediately summoned a small mountain of treasures, but he was a bit curious to note that they seemed to have been sorted.

"Truth be told we went through the items, but I promise that not a single thing is missing. I oversaw everything," Thea said before she looked over at a few crates. "There are a few things we would like to purchase from you that we found in this pile."

"Port Atwood is always happy to oblige in some trade, provided the price is right," Calrin's voice suddenly could be heard across the garden.

Zac almost jumped straight into the air in shock, since the voice had come straight out of nowhere. He quickly looked around to find Calrin standing just a few meters away. He saw Zac's shocked face and gave a small bow.

"I smelled treasure," the Sky Gnome said as he walked over to the pile that Thea had indicated. "I wonder what Miss Marshall would use in exchange for these treasures? You should know that Port Atwood currently lacks nothing apart from exotic treasures."

"What are you doing here?" Thea said as she looked down at Calrin as he started rummaging through the things they wanted to keep.

"It appears our business interests have met a snag here in Westfort, so I had some free time to help out my good friend," Calrin pointedly said. "Now these are some valuable items, no wonder your force would want to buy them."

Some annoyance started to appear on Thea's face, and she turned toward Zac. However, business was business so Zac only shrugged with a small smile as he let the two battle it out. He trusted Calrin's discerning eye. The gnome would neither let a real treasure slip through his fingers nor take a loss on the items he was ready to sell off.

In the end, Calrin staunchly refused the sale of two large crates of herbs, but he was ready to haggle for the rest. Zac didn't recognize those plants at all, but they weren't bad since they emitted pretty dense energies. As for the rest, it was sold for 124 million Nexus Coins that would be paid in three installments. At this point, Zac made sure that the money would go to him rather than the insatiable little gnome since this deal did not go through the Thayer Consortia.

The price itself seemed somewhat low, but it came with some strings attached. It appeared that the Business Venture that Starlight backed was also aiming to set up a branch in Westfort, and the Marshall Clan was happy to have the two businesses duke it out and provide better benefits.

Calrin managed to get a three-month head-start through this deal, barring the Flowing Moon Corporation from doing business at all during that period. Three months wasn't too much, but it was also a critical period on Earth. Large wars would take place, and Thayer Consortia would be able to unload its enormous stockpiles of equipment to the Marshalls and their allies.

Calrin's original intention was for commercial monopoly though, just like he enjoyed in Port Atwood, but that was staunchly refused by Thea. Zac found that she was almost a completely different person when it came to business, and she gave the little sky gnome quite the workout.

Zac was also interested to see that Thea had no problems deciding these things on the spot, meaning that she might enjoy a similar status as himself in the clan. Zac let others handle most issues, but he always had the final say. Zac had assumed that Henry was calling all the shots since the family seemed to run like in the old world, but perhaps that wasn't completely the case.

After they were done with the negotiations Calrin dragged him to the side.

"That's a good one. Finding a wife with a talent for management will allow a man to adventure with peace of mind," Calrin said with a satisfied nod.

"Great," Zac sighed with a roll of his eyes. "What were those herbs you kept?"

"They are called [Cosmic Bloodroot] and are used to improve one's constitution. Together with the [Aetherbloom] we attained from New Washington and a few other ingredients we will be able to make extremely potent Medicine Baths to move constitutions toward D-Grade," the Gnome Excitedly said.

Zac whistled in surprise. That was something that Port Atwood currently lacked. It wouldn't be long before both himself and a handful of the Demons reached E-Grade, and having this would motivate them to contribute even harder.

After saying goodbye to Calrin he rejoined Thea as they walked toward the enormous seashell. Now that it wasn't pitch-black outside he could see that it was a deep blue and shimmered like it was inlaid with crystals all along the surface.

"It was initially built by an aquatic species, but the System remodeled it to work above-ground it seems," Thea explained as they moved forward. "The librarian is a bit angry about it though, it does not like non-marine beings. We found that unless you are quite specific in your requests it might try to trip you up."

Zac coughed as he threw Thea an odd glance. He was starting to form a guess about the System. It was the largest employer in the universe and had multiple sales channels. Was it awarding slightly broken or troublesome things for quests because it had trouble pawning them off to more established forces? The only exception seemed to be the Creator shipyard, though he knew that both Rahm and Karunthel seemed a bit odd even for being Creators.

As they got closer to the entrance of the library Zac spotted a familiar figure sitting on a bench nearby enjoying the sun. He felt a headache incoming but still chose to walk over with Thea curiously following in tow.

"What are you doing here?" Zac asked with some helplessness.

"The library sounded quite interesting. In contrast to Ogras and the others I come from humble beginnings, and never had a formal education. I wanted to see if I could join you inside," Alea said with a smile as she looked over at Thea.

"This is Alea, one of the leaders of the demons," Zac introduced her to Thea. "Alea, this is Thea Marshall."

"Hi, if you're a friend of Zac's you're welcome to join," Thea said with a nod.

Zac internally breathed in relief when he saw that the poison mistress wasn't here to cause any trouble and walked toward the library. The moment he stepped inside all sounds from the outside disappeared, and he was filled with a sense of tranquility as he looked around the magnificent building.

There were no ceilings in the shell and he could see up to the top of the spiral. Lining the walls were innumerable bookcases and floating crystals, and they kept going along the spirals all the way to the top. The bottom floor was also studded with reading nooks and comfortable sofas, the latter seemingly an

addition of the Marshall's. Zac also noted that there was at least one shimmering partition some ways up, which slightly distorted the vision.

"It seems I need to pass a certain trial to unlock the top tier information crystals," Thea explained as she looked up at the layer. "Until then we can only browse what's beneath."

"So how do you find what you're looking for?" Zac asked as he looked around. There were hundreds of bookshelves on just the ground floor, but not a single sign anywhere.

"Ask Big Blue," Thea said.

"Huh?" Zac said, but the next moment an enormous monster appeared in front of him.

It was like something wrought out of a Lovecraftian nightmare, a monstrous head with hundreds of long tentacles. Dozens of pitch-black eyes stared down at them, the largest of which as large as a beach ball. Zac immediately took out his axe in alarm, and Alea looked ready to drown the whole area in poison as she turned her eyes toward Thea.

"Wait!" Thea said. "That's the librarian!"

Zac hesitantly looked up at the enormous monster reaching almost ten meters into the air, and he couldn't believe this thing was a keeper of knowledge.

"New bipedals soil my sanctuary. You even bring the barbaric demonkin this time? Base creatures that only know lust and violence," a rumbling voice echoed out through the library as the large head of the Librarian turned away in annoyance.

"It has worked well for us so far," Alea said with a smile, but there was a dangerous glint in her eyes.

"I'm sorry, just ignore Big Blue. He has some personality problems, but he is very knowledgeable. Just ask him what you want to learn more about and he will get it for you," Thea explained with a helpless smile.

Zac nodded and simply asked about the Undead Empire to start with. Zac had honestly already figured out most things that were bothering him inside the trail already, meaning this place wasn't as valuable to him anymore. But he still had a day to spend while Adran and Calrin hammered out the details of the cooperation agreements with the Marshall Clan and Nonet visited the other hive.

So he chose to shore up his knowledge of various fields during the day. He got a better understanding of how the multiverse worked for example, and he couldn't help but be shocked by the immensity of it all.

One theoretically could understand that the multiverse was boundless, but such a thing was too abstract. But when one started to get down to detail it started to get insane. For example, a single undead family could control hundreds of thousands of planets, and yet they would only be the drop in the ocean of the Undead Empire. Even an A-Grade powerhouse might die of old age before having visited every planet.

But even though the universe held boundless planets and things to see it seemed that interplanetary travel was not something that was more than a fraction of people would experience in their lifetimes. No matter if one lived at an F or D-Grade world most would never leave their planet, much less their sector. It was both an issue of danger and resources.

To travel between planets in a local cluster you needed at least a D-Grade cosmic ship unless you possessed teleportation access. Those ships could utilize the Dao of Space to move faster than light, making it possible to traverse those massive distances. But you needed higher-grade ships to travel outside of the local cluster. A C-Grade ship was needed to travel within a galaxy, and a B-Grade ship was needed to travel between galaxies and explore whole star sectors.

In the end, there were too many forces and worlds to keep proper track of everything, and the system generally clumped sectors together. For example, it turned out that all the forces invading Earth was from the same star sector, though not necessarily the same galaxy.

The author of the book theorized that the System wanted to find a balance between safety for newly integrated planets, but at the same time waste a minimal amount of energy for the trials. So it didn't want forces in too close a proximity to invade, but it also didn't want to teleport people too far.

Of course, there were some exceptions to this. Some forces were just so massive that they existed in multiple universes, having pockets of control almost everywhere. The Undead Empire was one such example, and there were a few more massive empires and alliances like that as well.

That meant that the risk of running into those forces of the Incursions in the future was a lot higher than he expected. A few of them might even come from the same galaxy their planet had been moved to.

"It's shocking, isn't it?" Thea suddenly said from the side. "I read that same crystal a few days after I got this place. The scale of it all is crazy."

Zac nodded in agreement. But what Zac really was thinking about was what would happen to him after he offended every single incursion by killing their leaders and forcing the rest to flee in shame.

Would he even be able to leave the planet in the future?