Wanderer 102

Chapter 102: Micky's second core

"A bit overkill, don't you think? I'll forget everything after I leave anyway." the Oblivious Agent said upon noticing Percy's disguise.

"I'd rather not take any chances." the latter replied, regurgitating his side of the conversation word for word.

"Fair enough." the man nodded once he drew closer.

Then he carefully dropped the pouch on the ground like all their previous meetings.

"Why do you guys even do this?" Percy asked again.

"I can't speak for the others, but I'm just using my ability for the sake of my family."

'3 out of 3 so far.' Percy thought.

By now, he'd met the man about a dozen times. He'd always repeated the exact same words to the Agent, gauging his responses. While there were some minor permutations, the gist of what the guy said was more or less the same. At the very least, he'd never given him any reason to suspect he remembered any of their previous conversations.

"Well, sure… but isn't the cost too high? Aren't you worried you'll look back one day only to realize you can't remember half your life?" Percy asked the final set of questions, carefully observing the Agent's reaction.

"No offense, but forgetting you isn't that big a deal." the Agent shrugged.

"None taken." Percy nodded, relaxing.

Either the Agent had truly erased his memories as he was supposed to, or he was the best actor ever. In any case, this was the most Percy could do to contribute to the operation's security.

'Let's leave this stuff to Nesha. She's better at it than I am...'

After watching the man leave, he called his familiar over, hoping this latest batch of enlightenment potions would seal the deal. By now, he'd already fed Micky over 110,000 of the darn things which, according to his original estimates, should have been enough. Clearly, he'd miscalculated how much mind mana each dose contained, though he didn't know by how much.

'Best-case scenario, today's shipment will be the last… As for the worst-case scenario… I'd rather not think about it…'

Of course, even if they were still months away, he'd have no choice but to keep going. It wasn't like he had an alternative.

"CAW!" the crow greeted him upon reaching his location.

Percy didn't miss the hint of annoyance in its tone. While he'd explained many times how everything was for Micky's benefit, the latter really hated gulping down potions for hours on end.

'Just shut up and drink them...' he rolled his eyes.

Why was the crow even complaining? He was the one who'd spent weeks brewing elixirs so they could afford the potions anyway…

"CRAA!" the bird groaned but ultimately obeyed, flying to its nest.

Over the next few hours, Percy remained on the ground level of the Spire, practicing his affinity fusion while waiting for the familiar to finish. As for his wasp clone, he'd already retired him a couple months ago. Right now, he had another one active somewhere in the cosmos. Though he doubted he'd accomplish anything of note. His successful expeditions so far could be counted on one hand.

‘I should go for the Starry Soldier next…’

He’d placed the infiltration mission on hold for the time being, to focus on more pressing matters, like mastering Synchronization and affinity fusion. But he’d already grown much better at both. Also, his time in the Guild wasn’t infinite. While the lotus was still over two years from blooming, Percy couldn’t afford to waste a second if he wanted to have the wasp familiar ready before leaving.

‘CAW!’

Suddenly, Micky called out to him. For a moment, Percy thought the bird had finished the potions, but it was too early for that.

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‘Don’t tell me?’ he asked with hope in his eyes.

‘CAW!’ the crow affirmed.

Not missing a beat, Percy activated Synchronization, rushing to his familiar at top speed. The bird’s nest was a few miles away, but the young man crossed the distance in under a minute, stamina be damned. It was only when he got there that he remembered he could check Micky’s Status from afar.

‘Right…’

Mictlantecuhtli (Percival's familiar)

Mana cores:

Spells:

Decrees:

As usual, the bird lacked most of his Decrees. Percy was particularly relieved it didn't have Metatron's either. He didn't know if Micky could enter his portal should he ever open one, but he was certainly glad the crow couldn't create its own by accident.

'It makes sense, since I only got it later…'

Beyond that, everything was as expected. Not to say he wasn't over the moon seeing Micky's second core finally repaired! They'd worked on it for years!

'Congratulations! This is HUGE!'

"CAW!" the bird seemed to share his enthusiasm, though not for the same reason.

It was just glad it could finally stop drinking all those potions.

Over the next couple of hours, Percy showed his familiar the ropes, explaining how it was meant to locate the new core and start clearing the corresponding channels. It helped he'd personally experienced the process twice already, as he had plenty of related memories to send over, getting the message across.

'I guess there's no point staying here…'

As impatient as he was, he knew the crow wouldn't be done for a few days at the earliest. Begrudgingly, he left the hunting grounds, though not before emphasizing to the bird that it should contact him the moment anything happened.

'It's going to be another beast affinity, isn't it?'

Percy knew there was a high chance of that happening. After all, he'd never heard of a beast possessing anything else. Then again, he'd never heard of one with two cores either. This would probably be an anomaly even on the Moirais' world.

Though getting another beast affinity wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing. It was responsible for the mutations and enhanced physical strength of its owners. With a second one of those, Micky would probably grow even larger. In fact, Percy couldn't think of any other affinity that would synergize better with the crow's first one.

'He won't even have too many new channels to open. Just a couple linking the second core to the rest of the circulatory system.'

That would be convenient at first, though it would come with its own share of downsides. For example, the crow wouldn't be able to get as much juice out of Circulation with only one set of channels across both cores.

'Will a different affinity even help much though?'

Micky had devoured thousands of wasp cores over the years. Percy wasn't sure how close the bird was to advancing again, but it shouldn't be far. As soon as that happened, he'd have a two-grade gap between its cores. Even worse, the second one might never catch up, even with Aurora Dew. In the end he shook his head.

'I'm just torturing myself. Whatever it is, we'll find a way to make it work.'

Well, as long as it wasn't another pure affinity. Now, that would suck big time…

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It wasn't until three days later that Micky informed him he managed to draw some mana into his abdomen, activating the core. Only then did the bird finally come to appreciate the value of those potions, basking in its new strength.

On the other hand, Percy couldn't help but frown. The affinity was still listed as a bunch of question marks. At the very least, it meant Micky hadn't gained another beast affinity, as he would have recognized it.

'Just pull some mana from your core and send me the image.'

The bird followed his instructions, soon showing him a burst of mana emanating from the underside of its wing, brushing over the dark feathers. It carried a faint green tint…

'Not pure mana!' was Percy's first reaction.

In fact, he recognized it the very next moment, having personally used this particular affinity the most outside his own.

'It's air.' he informed his familiar, before elaborating. 'Remember that bandit you fought a few years back? He had that.'

Micky remained silent for a few seconds, apparently recalling their journey to the Guild. Eventually, he excitedly sent a mental nod back.

Either way, this was great news!

Besides a second beast affinity, this was essentially the best they could've hoped for. Though it would likely end up falling behind the crow's first core, it would support the bird well, allowing it to augment its flight.

'I can share my own experiences to get him started.'

He couldn't help but grin at the thought. The irony of a human teaching a bird how to fly faster wasn't lost on him. Still, there was no reason to waste all that training he'd undergone in the Vault.

‘Finally, we can stop spending all those contribution points on potions… I can start stockpiling ingredients for when we leave the settlement…’

Whether or not he succeeded in creating the wasp familiar, Percy hoped to amass enough resources by the time they left, to last him for a while. Hopefully even for a decade or two. Admittedly, that was an ambitious goal but not impossible, assuming he could maintain his current income for the following two years.

Unfortunately, he couldn’t have predicted what would happen just three short months later…