Wanderer 104

Chapter 104: Smooth sailing no more

Percy was on the way back from Orin's place, when he saw an unusual group of people heading towards him.

'What's going on?' he raised an eyebrow, stopping in his tracks.

None of them wore the Guild's robes – they were outsiders. Of course, that alone wouldn't have shocked him. Lots of merchants passed by every day. What left him speechless was that he recognized the insignia on their clothes. It definitely wasn't one he often saw on the streets. Depicting a series of roots emerging from the underside of a cloud, there was no mistaking it – these were members of the Divine Root.

'Shit! What do they want from me?! Is our jig up?!'

Even among the seven Great Houses, the Divine Root was a special existence, as they were closely affiliated with the Divine Order. The inner circle of the Divine Order consisted only of gods, or of the mortals deemed talented enough to have a chance of ascending to divinity one day. Their job was to look outwards, guarding Remior against external threats. While they were the undisputed leaders of Remior, they didn't have the time to manage all the worldly affairs beneath their feet. Consequently, the deities delegated many of those tedious tasks to their subordinates. The Divine Root was essentially their outer circle, consisting solely of mortals who lacked the potential to attain godhood.

Not that it made them weak! While the gods viewed the members of the Divine Root as talentless rejects – the failed children who weren't good enough to join them – the rest of Remior could only look up to them, as they stood at the top even among the rest of the Great Houses! After all, many were direct descendants of the deities themselves, making the organization the largest gathering of blessings and powerful bloodlines in the world!

'They're like the people of the Vault, all gathered in a single House…'

Percy clenched his fists, knowing there was no escaping. There was a Blue core in the group! He was a tall man with gunmetal-grey hair whose piercing gaze sent shivers down his spine. Though this person was the same grade as Orin, the two couldn't be further apart in strength.

‘I bet he has a blessing. He might even be able to hold his own against baldy for a minute or two…’

As the men approached – six of them in total – Percy couldn’t help but instinctively hold his breath, the suffocating auras they passively radiated making it difficult to do otherwise. And when they were only a couple metres away, he closed his eyes too, bracing for the worst…

‘Huh? They just ignored me!’

The group passed right by him, most of them not sparing him a glance. The only exception was a blond young man who appeared the same age as him. He was already at Green – probably a Yellow-born. He scanned Percy for the briefest of instants, his derisive sneer soon giving way to cold indifference.

Only once they were all behind him did Percy remember to let out the turbid air in his lungs, cold sweat trickling down his face.

‘Right. We’ve gone to great lengths to hide our trail. It’s probably just a coincide–’

Sadly, he didn’t even get to the end of that thought before the world proved him wrong. A shockwave suddenly coursed through him, making everything around him shake. It was followed by a gust of wind that sent the colourful particles of mana southward. The bizarre event felt extremely familiar – the last time something like this happened being firmly engraved in Percy’s memory…

“Attention, denizens of Remior! This is Hermes again.” the eccentric god’s voice boomed from everywhere at once.

“It’s quite rare for me to be making announcements like this so often. So, hooray for you, I guess! You get to hear a god speak twice in a few years! What’s more, it’s good news again, so double hooray! Trust me, it’s better than the alternative – you really don’t want me to come out here informing you that Remior has fallen and you’re all about to die.”

The god chuckled.

“Relax, that was a joke. Well, not really. It could actually happen – I just found it funny. In any case, you might be wondering why I’m contacting you again. No, the lotus hasn’t bloomed early. That’s still over two years away, as originally planned. Today, I’m reaching out for a different matter.”

The story has been stolen; if detected on Amazon, report the violation.

Percy swallowed hard, holding some hope deep down that it wasn’t about him, though it was evaporating quickly – it would be way too big of a coincidence.

And sure enough…

“You see, one of the brilliant folks in the Alchemists’ Guild has invented some new elixirs that can be consumed three times as often! I trust I don’t have to explain what this means for Remior.”

‘Gee, thanks for the compliment…’ Percy smiled bitterly as his worst fears came to light.

“Speaking as somebody who’s seen lots of amazing treasures out there – each of which would make your mouths water – this is HUGE! Even for us! We’ll get more gods, and you’ll get more Violet and White cores!

The only ones who’ll get squat are the Red-borns, but then again… who cares about them anyway, right? It’s not like we had enough elixirs to waste on them before, let alone now. However, everyone else will benefit! Well, as soon as we can mass-produce this so-called Aurora Dew, that is. Big fan of the name, by the way! Props to whomever came up with it!

In any case, this is all nice and dandy, but we’ve sadly run into a small problem…”

Knowing where this was heading, Percy took off, hurrying towards Nesha’s gambling den. Contacting her right now was risky, but so was waiting around until the Divine Root homed in on them.

“Apparently, the smartass who came up with the recipe chose to keep it to himself, sneaking around to sell it to a small number of people at a premium. Honestly, I get the temptation, but we can’t have that. Whoever you are, we’re willing to pretend the last few months never happened, provided you come

forward right now. We'll give you something for your trouble, and a nice god-approved pat on the back, and we can all have a great time moving forward.

We know you've gone through a lot of trouble to hide from us, but trust me, that isn't going to last long. We've already sent a group from the Divine Root to interrogate all the registered alchemists in the Guild, and they'll find you sooner or later. Until then, security at the Guild's borders will be tripled, and nobody will be allowed to enter or exit without being searched from head to toe.

I suppose I needn't say anything else. If you were smart enough to come up with such a marvellous elixir, you can probably tell what's best for you. The rest, I'll leave to our capable underlings. Ba-bye!"

'Crap!' Percy couldn't help but curse in his head.

This was about as bad as expected. The only upside was that he'd never taken the test to officially register as an alchemist. That was probably why the men had ignored him earlier. Well, that and the fact he was dressed in orange robes. Nobody would have expected him of all people to be behind such a breakthrough. But his cheap veil of anonymity wouldn't last forever. As soon as the Divine Root ran out of people to search, they'd branch outwards, until they eventually got to him or Nesha.

Even if they destroyed all the evidence of the operation by then, Percy still had plenty of other secrets he couldn't afford to leak. If anyone wondered why he had a bandage wrapped around his abdomen, it could easily lead to them learning about his second core. From there, the gods would get involved directly, discovering Metatron's Decree too. Realizing how quickly he was running out of time; Percy quickened his steps.

'And that's assuming Orin doesn't tell them anything.'

He knew his mentor wouldn't hurt him on purpose, but the man had been opposed to keeping the secret from the beginning. If the old alchemist thought he was doing Remior – or even Percy – a favour, he might choose to come forward.

Reaching Nesha's place, he forced himself to calm down, trying not to look too suspicious. Entering the building, his ears soon buzzed with a cacophony of cheers and loud discussions. The den was packed to the brim with Nesha's regulars, but none of them was playing right now. They'd all forgotten about the chips, dice and cards in their hands, instead excitedly talking about the announcement they'd just heard.

“Can you believe it?! I’m only seventy years old! I can actually reach Violet and become the leader of my House one day!!” somebody shouted.

But his mate slapped him on the back.

“Yeah right. The Yellow-borns will get the elixirs too, remember? By the time you get to Violet, Remior will be unrecognizable. There might be dozens of Whites and thousands of Violets by then. I doubt the number of noble Houses will increase that much though. It’ll only raise the bar higher…”

The first guy appeared to ponder his friend’s words, but somebody else spoke next.

“Screw politics! With this, we’ll live much longer!!”

Though the new guy got shot down fast too.

“You idiot! Most people don’t die of old age anyway… When’s the last time you met somebody older than 600? We’ll still get killed in some war like before…”

More shouts ensued, but Percy ignored them, pushing forward. Luckily, nobody seemed to pay him any attention either. Eventually, he reached Nesha. At first, neither of them said anything, as they merely exchanged a knowing glance. Only a few seconds later did she speak.

“Two hours.”

Percy nodded, before turning around and leaving. They’d already made plans for the worst-case scenario. After all, they’d always intended to stop the operation within a couple of years anyway. Naturally, their clients wouldn’t have taken kindly to the supply of Aurora Dew getting cut off abruptly, so Percy and Nesha had prepared an exit strategy. Of course, they’d originally planned to be long gone by the time the shitstorm reached the settlement. Sadly, it was too late for that now, complicating things.

That said…

‘I’ll be damned if I give away all my hard work to those assholes…’