

Percy sat on his bed, next to his grandpa. It had been two weeks since baldy started filling his second core. Sadly, they didn't have anything to show for it yet, not even a hint they were getting closer.

Still, the young man was feeling some newfound appreciation for his grandpa. Not only because he was practically showering him with affection for the first time in his life, but also due to his sheer dedication and discipline. Frankly, the man was a monster. Every day, he showed up before sunrise, and didn't leave his room until hours past sunset. Well, besides a few mandatory breaks of course.

'I guess you don't reach Violet by accident.'

Having delegated the family's management to his sons and daughters, baldy didn't slack at all. It took him nearly five minutes to empty his core and about twenty to refill it. He spent over 18 hours per day in Percy's room and the young man once counted a total of 42 refills. Percy had almost expected him

to give up after the first week, but Archibald showed no intention of doing that. Pressing on, he seemed determined to follow his words through to the end.

And watching him work hard, Percy was also motivated to keep his training up.

For the first few days, he'd continued honing the sharpness and integrity of his constructs. When he began experiencing diminishing returns, he switched to increasing their range. That said, his room wasn't that large, so he had to stop when they reached the walls. Naturally, his soul mana could phase through, but he didn't want to hit somebody on the other side by accident.

However, the weirdest thing was how his grandpa had started talking to him since the second day. In hindsight, it shouldn't have surprised Percy. After all, the two would be stuck spending all their time together for who-knew how long. It would be stranger if they never talked. Still, he wasn't used to casual chats with baldy, the two having limited their past interactions to the bare minimum.

As for what they talked about?

Well, at first his grandpa offered him tips and guidance on how to better manipulate and recover his mana. A few days later, however, they graduated to more idle chatter, even gossiping about Percy's aunts and uncles, or teaching the young man about the other families on Remior. *Stuff he couldn't find in books.*

Percy knew the man was overcompensating, largely because of the harsh things he had spoken during their meeting, but he didn't say anything to stop it. It was embarrassing to admit, but this felt... *nice.*

He formed the daggers in his hand for the billionth time.

They didn't look very elegant. Their shape was irregular, closer to sharpened stones than finely crafted knives. Percy wouldn't be winning any art competition with them, that was for sure. Still, they were sturdy, and he was confident they would be useful in a fight.

Having reached an acceptable shape and range, he'd even learned to produce two of them with each hand at once. Today, he was planning to try forming a third, when his grandpa suggested something different.

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“Maybe you should figure out how your bloodline works.”

GULP

Percy knew he was right.

Creating that soul clone had been the greatest turning point in his life. If it hadn't been for that, he might have never found out his affinity or gained access to better elixirs. He certainly wouldn't have a second core to work towards and he might have never gotten to know his grandpa better. And that was just the start. How many more mysteries lied out there in the cosmos? What else could he bring back to Remior?

'I suppose I should stop postponing it then.'

The reason he'd been so hesitant, was because he wasn't keen on experiencing the agony of splitting his soul again. Frankly, it was something he wouldn't wish on his worst enemy. Yet, it was the only way forward...

SIGH

He activated Soul Vision, this time glancing down at his own soul. After all, that was the starting point for everything else. A sea of silver blinded him, causing him to shut his eyes. He reduced the concentration of mana before opening them again.

Fine-tuning the ability to work at such a close distance took him about an hour. This was because he also wanted more detail than he usually got, to more closely examine his soul. As the flame underneath his flesh came into focus, Percy's eyes widened. For the most part, it was similar to every other he had looked at.

However, there was one important difference which sent shivers down his spine.

The semi-amorphous silhouette flowing under his skin was covered in countless cracks! Each was far narrower than the one he had inflicted on the goblin, their thickness akin to a hair's. However, they were many times longer, one even stretching across his entire forearm.

His soul was like a broken vase, held together by spit and wishes!

“Is everything alright?” Archibald asked in concern.

Percy explained the situation.

“I see. You must have really messed your soul up. It’s lucky you survived.”

The young man nodded, his expression grim.

“What now? Do souls recover over time?” he asked.

He didn’t even know why it didn’t hurt right now. Maybe it was because the cracks were too narrow, or perhaps it was all relative. Experiencing his soul clone crumbling apart might have raised his tolerance to the point his current state didn’t bother him.

Either way, he wouldn't risk using his bloodline like this.

“Hmmm... For the time being, I suggest you observe your soul for a few days to see if it can heal by itself. Also, check if you can speed up the process with your mana.”

Another two weeks passed by in a flash.

During this time, Archibald had continued pouring mana into his grandson's abdomen, with no end in sight. Calculating everything, he should have already passed 1000 refills a while ago, but the seed showed no signs of being satiated.

Luckily, Percy had found more success with regards to his cracked soul. Fortunately, it turned out it *did* recover by itself, albeit slowly. Adding the weeks before he began observing it, Percy estimated it would have needed a total of about three months to fully recover.

Even better, focusing his soul mana on the wounds had proven exceptionally effective, accelerating the process threefold. In a couple more days, it should be as good as new!

'It's a pity it hurts so fucking much.'

Indeed, the only downside was that this approach seemed to agitate the injuries. It was a bit like rubbing salt in a wound, only a hundred times worse. Suffice to say, the last couple of weeks had been far from pleasant. Still, it was a small price to pay if it meant he could use his bloodline again that much sooner.

"Next time you shouldn't activate it randomly." his grandpa said.

Percy frowned.

"Well, how else am I supposed to do it?"

Baldy appeared to think for a few minutes before replying.

“I can’t tell you that. The bloodline works differently in your case. Nobody but you can answer that question. However, what I *can* do, is to give you some inspiration. Tomorrow, I’ll take a break from pouring mana into your core.”

“Why?” Percy asked.

“I’ll need it for something else. I’m going to demonstrate our family’s most fundamental technique. It has been passed down and refined for over 1700 years.”

GULP

“You mean...”

Archibald nodded.

“I’m going to show you how to efficiently cultivate a life clone.”