Wanderer 26

Chapter 26: Secret Arts

Percy opened his eyes, a flash blinding him. It soon died down into a mix of colours, but still too blurry to make out much. The off-white of his bedroom wall was predominant, although there was something else by his side. It looked like the silhouette of a person. Or maybe just a piece of furniture.

"…"

He thought he heard them say something. It was muffled, as if they were underwater.

"…"

The furniture-person tried a few more times – with some minor permutations – but Percy still couldn't understand them. Soon, they gave up, disappearing from his sight. His eyes fell shut again…

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Once more, he faced what he thought was his wall, this time with two silhouettes surrounding him.

"…"

"…"

They made more sounds, the first one chirping at a higher pitch than the second. Percy tried to shift but found himself unable to even twitch his fingers.

"…"

"…"

The silhouettes kept speaking to him – at least, that's what he assumed was happening. However, he just couldn't filter them out of the buzz. Tired as he was, he wanted to doze off again, though he forced himself to stay awake.

One of the blurs moved, enlarging in his vision. They tugged his chin, the touch prickling him as if he'd been stabbed by needles, before pulling his mouth open. Then, something bland and lukewarm flowed down his throat. It left an aftertaste akin to chicken soup, but it was muted like the rest of his senses. It stopped after a while as they let go of him.

The two remained with him, chatting every now and then. It took a while, yet he noticed the figures had grown a bit more defined at some point. One of them – the one with the chirpy voice – was aquamarine near the top. He recognized it. Her.

'…Elaine…'

Percy tried muttering her name, but he couldn't even open his mouth without assistance. As for the other blur? Well, the only candidates would be Gawain or Archibald, though he wasn't sure who.

'What happened?'

Digging through his memories, he tried to recall how he ended up in this state. He remembered training. Lots of training. Practicing with his pure mana hadn't been very pleasant, but it was all he'd been able to do while waiting for something…

'Right, the clone.'

He was in the garden when it returned and then…

Pain.

Nausea.

Panic.

Frustration.

Desperation.

The clone brought something with it. Something important.

‘No, not something. Someone.’

He tried to help them. Percy remembered looking around for something. A vessel to place them in. To place Micky in.

Right.

‘Micky.’

A gladiator. A teacher. His teacher. His friend.

He couldn’t find a suitable body… until he did.

Percy climbed a tree, and then…

‘The egg!’

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The memories sobered him up. His vision was still blurry, but he understood now. He remembered. Once more, he tried to speak, but his mouth refused to budge. He willed his body to move. Any part of it. He needed to get Elaine's attention. To ask her what happened to Micky. His finger twitched. Soon, the silhouettes shifted too. They must have noticed.

"…Percy… ok?"

This time, he caught a couple words. It wasn't much but it was a start. Then, he felt his strength leaving him again.

'No. I have to tell them first.'

Talking seemed impossible. His mouth wouldn't open – Percy took his time bludgeoning it into shape. Pushing the air out of his lungs wasn't much easier. He wouldn't get many words out, so he had to choose them carefully. Just two of them. They'd have to do.

"…care… egg…"

Only after he was certain he saw Elaine nod did he allow himself to pass out again.

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It took a few more sessions like that until he could properly communicate with his cousin and grandpa. They appeared relieved he'd woken up, but also quite pissed off at him.

Percy didn't blame them. He'd gone to great lengths to learn how to use his bloodline safely, yet he'd tossed all that out of the window by activating it for the second time, not even letting his soul recover first. Right now, he couldn't even examine it, as he was unable to gather a sliver of soul mana. But that was probably for the best. He'd been unconscious for a whopping three weeks this time, and was still bedridden now, after waking up.

Still, he told his relatives of his time on Huehue – of the circumstances that had led him to do something so reckless. In fact, he and baldy even brought Elaine up to speed on his second core, not seeing much reason to keep it from her.

“Is the egg alright?” he asked.

Baldy gestured to his granddaughter to bring something, before speaking.

“Percy… I found you unconscious in front of a bird nest. Naturally, I assumed those eggs were important to you, even before you told us.”

His cousin walked to a corner of the room, picking a small object up before returning. Resting atop her hands was a nest made of dried branches, filled with broken eggs and discarded shells… and… something else. There was a tiny creature, sleeping soundly in the middle of the nest. A black chick small enough to fit in his palm.

“This little guy hatched just a couple of days after you passed out. We took care of him ever since. The rest we kept just in case.” she explained.

Percy nodded, gently picking the bird up.

‘Was this a mistake?’

He didn’t know if there was anything left of his friend in the creature. Even if Micky was in there, would he appreciate being shoved inside a newborn critter on a distant world?

‘It doesn’t matter.’ Percy shook his head.

This wasn’t the time for regrets. What was done was done. His priority right now was to make sure it survived. The rest, he could figure out later.

“Doesn’t look like it’s in great shape.” he said.

Even after being picked up, it remained asleep. Its breaths were soft and laboured.

“It was better when it hatched, but it’s been getting worse. We’ve been feeding it insects. It improves for a while every time it eats, but it never lasts long.” baldy explained.

“Waking it up is getting harder. The last time I managed was two days ago.” his cousin added.

Percy furrowed his brow. He wasn’t sure where the problem lied. It might be due to its body, as the egg had been abandoned for who-knew how long. It should’ve been on the verge of death too, otherwise it wouldn’t have accepted the soul. Then again, its soul was probably in a sorry state as well. Perhaps even worse than his own. After all, it was a patchwork of three different existences. The bird’s, Micky’s and his. And each had been through hell and back by the time they mixed inside the egg.

‘I wish I could use Soul Vision.’

It was still impossible to accumulate more than a wisp of mana in his sternum before it got drained. Percy had no idea how long this would last. Perhaps, he’d crippled himself for life…

The only thing that might shed some light in this situation was his Status.

Percival Avalon

Mana cores:

Bloodline:

Spells:

???:

The only thing that had changed was the new section listing his spells. Percy had nearly forgotten about it. All his efforts in honing his soul constructs coupled with his desperation had culminated in the deadly strike he'd killed Mixcoatl with. Though he'd been too busy at the time to celebrate. It was the presence of a second spell that surprised him, however. This one, he didn't remember being notified about. Still, it should have happened when he pushed Micky's soul into the egg. Nothing else made sense.

"Grandpa, what's a 'Secret Art'?"

Baldy raised an eyebrow.

"Have you created one?"

Percy nodded, telling them of the new additions to his Status. Elaine listened too, clearly interested as well.

"I see. Well… simply put, a Secret Art is like a regular spell. The only difference is that it also involves your bloodline."

The young man had suspected it was something along those lines. Strictly speaking, what he'd done with the egg wasn't very different from creating a regular clone.

'Come to think of it, I do feel a connection to Micky!'

It was the same kind of sensation his clones and main body experienced, linking them to one another. Though he couldn't observe his soul right now, he didn't need to. Allowing his thoughts to sink into the cord, Percy's eyes widened as a new Status page manifested in his vision.

Mictlantecuhtli (Percival's familiar)