Wanderer 28

Chapter 28: A peculiar diet

There was no mistaking it. The excess mana spilling out of Micky was soul mana!

They hadn't been able to identify it earlier because Mana Sense couldn't differentiate between various affinities. The only thing that determined its appearance in that case was purity and density – in other words, its grade. That was why everything had appeared Red previously. Only with Soul Vision could Percy have noticed the difference…

'Right, Soul Vision!'

The young man tried to tap into the trickle sent over by his familiar, to direct it to his eyes, but his broken soul quickly snatched it too.

"Keep going, Micky! Eat!!"

He did catch the strange looks Elaine and baldy gave him, but he didn't say anything. He could explain later. Heeding his request, the bird dove back into the mouse's flesh, as Percy took a deep breath. And then another, trying to refill his first core. The mana regenerated slowly at first, but soon another stream flowed through the cord, Micky having discovered how to relieve himself of the excess pressure already.

It took all of Percy's willpower to gather enough in his eyes, but he managed to augment his sight at last. As soon as Soul Vision activated, he tossed a quick glance down his own soul. Saying it was a mess wouldn't do it justice. The crater in his chest had greatly expanded. As for the rest, it almost resembled minced meat, held together by numerous thin threads.

'No wonder I can barely even stand.'

He shook his head. The priority right now was to figure out what Micky was doing. Turning to his familiar, he saw his soul wasn't much better. It was made of three distinct pieces that had been hastily twisted together like a yarn ball. At least, his body was filled to the brim with soul mana, which

constantly latched onto the damaged soul to mend it. Of course, it would take ages for it to be fully repaired at this pace, but this was promising.

Next, his attention shifted to Micky's beak. His soul was gathered there, sharpening the edges, making them glint in Percy's Soul Vision. It reminded the young man of the daggers he constructed with his soul mana. Every time the bird pecked at the dying embers of the mouse's soul, a chunk of glowing silver slid down its throat along with the flesh, dissolving into soul mana in its stomach. The sight of the hatchling gleefully devouring another's soul as if it was little more than kibble sent a chill down Percy's spine.

'Wow. How is he even doing this?'

His best guess was that Micky's nature as a familiar had bled into his instincts as a beast, giving rise to this frightening ability. Either way, Percy knew at this moment that this would be the key to repairing both of their souls.

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"I'm going to throw him!" Percy yelled.

He was sitting on a branch, holding a bird with both hands. The bird was naturally Micky, who had grown twice as large as before, his feathers a slick black, absorbing the sunlight like uncut onyx.

"Go for it! I've got him!" Elaine replied.

She stood below him, an azure net fluttering in the air in front of her. Rather than rope, it seemed to be made of numerous interlocking streams of glowing water. Upon receiving a positive reply, the young man tossed the bird up. It fell rapidly, sending waves of panic through their connection.

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CAW!

‘You’ve got this!’ Percy sent back.

Betrayed by its only family, the bird had no option but to frantically flap its wings in a desperate attempt to right itself.

At first, its movements were clumsy. Still, just a couple of feet before hitting the net, its speed seemed to slow, as its direction shifted slightly, letting it glide over the net, landing softly on the ground a few metres away.

CAW! CAW!

Percy smiled as he saw his companion turn back his direction, giving him what was probably intended as a furious glare. Still, he could tell through their link the cute look contained more pride than anger.

‘Show off.’

It had been a month since they discovered Micky’s ability.

For the first week, Percy had relied on his cousin to bring food for the bird, as he had personally been too weak to walk. A dozen meals later, however, both their conditions had improved significantly. By then, Percy was able to move around on his own, allowing him to take care of his friend by himself.

Every morning since then, Percy went on a stroll a couple miles away from the mansion, with Micky perched on his shoulder. The young man used those opportunities to stretch his legs, while simultaneously setting all sorts of mouse traps and rabbit snares in the surrounding fields, collecting the previous day’s haul in the process. Then, he fed his familiar for an hour or two, as they both used the influx of soul mana to hasten their recovery.

“We should head back. Grandpa is waiting for us.” Elaine said.

Percy nodded. Today was the day he’d been looking forward to for a while now. He’d finally recovered enough to add another important item to his daily routine.

The two returned to Archibald's office where they found their grandpa dressed in training robes. He gestured them to follow him, as he led the teenagers to a spacious room somewhere inside the mansion. They had chosen this location over the outdoors training grounds as privacy was paramount for what they planned to do.

Next, both baldy and Elaine looked at Percy expectantly. After all, he was going to be their teacher during these sessions. The young man cleared his throat, assuming the role of a sagely scholar as his relatives rolled their eyes.

"So, the first thing we need to do is straightforward strength training to push our bodies to their limits."

Without waiting for them, he dropped to the floor, beginning a set of push ups. Baldy and Elaine didn't say anything, joining him just a moment later. Of course, a simple workout wasn't nearly demanding enough for the powerful mages.

To truly challenge themselves and benefit from the training, each of them had strapped weights all over their bodies, raising the intensity of the exercises sharply. Obviously, baldy's were by far the heaviest, as he lifted a couple tons with each repetition. Even Elaine's were no joke at a couple hundred kilos. Meanwhile, Percy's were much more modest by comparison.

Either way, if it hadn't been for the numerous runes glowing on the floor, he was sure the wooden planks would have collapsed under the pressure, the commotion drawing the attention of the rest of his family. A lot of silencing wards covered the walls too.

PANT, PANT, PANT

About an hour later, all three were lying on their backs, breathing heavily, their bodies drenched with sweat. Naturally, the trio were here to practice the Dance of the Savage Gods – or at least the parts that Micky had been able to show him back on Huehue.

Percy could have kept the powerful art to himself of course, but there were many reasons why he'd chosen to share it. Firstly, both Elaine and Archibald had done a lot for him, so he'd decided to bring something back for them even before sending out that clone.

Secondly, as much as Percy wished he were strong enough to survive on Remior on his own, he understood he currently had no choice but to hide under his House's insignia. For the time being, his safety hinged entirely on baldy's ability to defend their family from their enemies. Consequently, helping his grandpa grow stronger would benefit them all.

Finally, Percy actually needed his grandpa's help once again, to practice the technique more efficiently.

"Ready to resume?" the young man asked.

Physical training essentially involved breaking down and repairing one's muscles. Humans could only exercise for a few hours per day, lest they injured themselves, doing more harm than good. At least, that was the case if one didn't have a grandpa with a life affinity and a Violet core healing them.

"Alright." baldy said.

The young man felt an intense pressure radiating out of his grandpa's core, as a wave of vibrant green flashed through the room. A few seconds later, his muscles stopped burning, his stamina having fully recovered. He didn't even hesitate before restarting his workout anew.

It was tough, of course, but the memory of the wounded gladiator's savage dance kept him going…