Wanderer 37

Chapter 37: Registration

As soon as the first rays of sunlight entered his room, Percy's eyes bolted open. The young man practically leapt to his feet, eager to register as an alchemist and begin hunting right away.

He was still tired, having only barely managed to catch a couple hours of sleep. Not that he hadn't tried to rest some more, but his anxiety and anticipation had narrowly won over his exhaustion. That said, he was at least functional right now and he didn't want to leave his familiar alone out there a moment longer than necessary.

'Micky, how are you doing?'

The response came delayed and strained.

'CAW…'

With it, Percy received a close-up image of a tree's branches – presumably where the bird had nested for the night. The young man hadn't missed the hint of annoyance contained in his friend's reply either. Micky should have just woken up.

Percy chuckled.

'I'm sorry buddy. Had to make sure you were ok.'

Exiting the inn, he briefly paused to appreciate the scenery. The colourful motes looked different than before, glinting as they fluttered in the soft light, but they were just as beautiful as last night, if not more so. There was some movement in the streets too, although not as much as he expected.

'I guess most people don't wake up this early.'

The few he did see all wore the Guild's uniform, with varying colours matching their grade. Most were Yellow but he did spot a couple Greens and even a Blue at some point. As for anything lower, he had yet to see one.

'Hopefully it's not compulsory to wear it. I'm gonna stick out like a sore thumb if I'm the only one in orange robes…' he grimaced at the thought.

Retracing his steps from the night before, he recalled the guard's instructions, trying to find the registration office. He did make it there eventually, albeit after having taken a couple wrong turns and being forced to ask a passerby.

'I blame the fatigue.'

Luckily, the building was already open, sparing him the torture of waiting outside. A clerk greeted him with a smile.

"Good morning! We'll need your guest badge, your recommendation letter and some details about yourself." he said, passing him a piece of paper and a quill.

Percy handed him the wooden badge and his grandpa's letter before examining the document. It was a form, meant to be filled with all sorts of personal information.

'My name, age, family, grade at birth, current grade, affinity, bloodline, reasons for joining the Guild, prior experience with alchemy…'

It all looked standard, although he wasn't comfortable with all the fields. Naturally, he wouldn't reveal anything about his second core, but he had to be truthful about his first one.

"Is anything wrong?" the clerk asked after a minute.

"Well, I was just wondering… What do you need all this information for?"

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The man chuckled.

“Don’t be so stressed. I know it’s a jungle out there, but you don’t have anything to worry about as long as you’re within the jurisdiction of the Guild. We need to know some basic things about the people who work here to make sure everything is in order. However, nobody will leak details of your bloodline or use any of the information you provide to harm you.”

Percy nodded, albeit reluctantly. This was in line with what baldy had explained, but it still felt weird being so open about his soul affinity and his ability. Logically, he understood nobody would piece together its function. And even if somebody wanted to hurt him, it wasn’t like they needed this information to do so. Still, he felt his stomach churn after he was done, as if he had been stripped naked in front of a stranger.

“Great! It will take about an hour to process your registration and prepare your new badge and clothes. In the meantime, please follow me.”

The clerk was already walking down a corridor by the time he finished speaking. Percy hurriedly caught up.

“About the robes… Is wearing them mandatory?” he asked with some hope in his eyes.

The man tossed him an apologetic look, probably realizing the source of his concern.

“Afraid so. Still, I assure you that your lower grade won’t affect your ability to access any of the Guild’s facilities. If you suspect anyone has refused to accommodate you just because of that, make sure to report them to the Guild’s management.”

Percy’s expression fell at the beginning of the clerk’s response, although he had to admit he did feel better by the end.

Soon, they reached an open door. It led to a small room with a few sets of desks and chairs facing a blackboard. There were two people already sitting in there, none of them wearing the Guild's robes.

"To save time, we explain everything to you in batches." the clerk said. "Please wait in this room for now. Your orientation will begin once a few more people gather."

After he left, Percy looked at the other newcomers. Both appeared around his age, although it would be misleading to make any assumptions based on that alone. Having reached adulthood, it would take them decades for any physical changes to show given their Yellow cores.

They also checked him out at first, but quickly frowned and grew disinterested upon noticing his grade. Despite what the clerk had said, people wouldn't stop looking down on him just like that. At most, the Guild's rules forced people to not decline him any important services, but their thoughts were still their own.

'Ok, fine. No talking then. Let's all wait in silence.'

And wait they did, for several more hours. Three more people were brought in by the clerk at various points, but he didn't seem keen on beginning the orientation just yet. Percy entertained himself by peering through his familiar's eyes, watching the bird hunt some black wasp-like creatures, stuffing its face full of Red cores.

The others in the room didn't have that option, however.

"How much longer until we start?! I've been here for six hours!!" one of them yelled at the clerk the next time he showed up.

"I apologize for the delay. Usually, we do this in groups of seven. Unfortunately, it's been a slow day today. If nobody shows up in the next hour, we'll start anyway."

The reactions were mixed. Some were visibly annoyed hearing they had to wait longer, while others appeared relieved to finally have a concrete timeframe. As for Percy, he was a bit more neutral on all this. He still itched to head out and begin hunting of course, but he was no longer worried about Micky. It was hard to be, after watching the bird play around all morning.

Either way, the clerk returned just a few minutes later to put them out of their misery, with the seventh person in tow. She was a girl in her late teens, her tousled dark hair barely reaching her shoulders. It matched the colour of her eyes, half-hidden behind glasses. Her frame was petite, dressed in casual clothes. Not exactly what one would expect from a noble lady. In fact, unlike the others in the room, Percy failed to recognize her House's insignia.

'Must be a new family.'

Either way, she was at Yellow, like everyone else besides him. He figured they were all Orange-borns too. It fit with their appearances. They didn't look old enough to be Red-borns or young enough to be Yellow-borns. At least, the new girl didn't look at him with ridicule like the rest. Well, technically she didn't even spare him a glance at all – or anyone else for that matter. Ignoring all the annoyed glares aimed her way, she sat at the nearest chair, before resting her face down on the desk. Evidently, she was only going through the motions, still half-asleep.

'It's past noon already! She's even worse than Micky!'

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The clerk cleared his throat, drawing everyone's attention. His gaze lingered on the drowsy girl for a moment, but he didn't dwell on her.

"I apologize again this took so long, but we can finally begin."