Wanderer 40

Chapter 40: Starry Workers

Percy had experienced a few peculiar things in his relatively short life. More than the average person on Remior, at least. After all, how many could boast of traversing the space between worlds with their soul, or fighting in an alien arena?

Still, walking atop a giant mushroom just HAD to make the list.

And it wasn't the first one today either. Each level of the Fungal Spire contained hundreds of them, the smallest being wide enough to fit a minor village. As for the largest – it was bigger than the Alchemists' Guild!

'It makes me feel like an ant.'

Well, the fact he was here to hunt giant bugs didn't help much either.

In any case, despite the novelty of this all, moving up and down the colossal structure was straightforward. Numerous suspension bridges had been built, linking the giant fungi together for everyone's convenience.

What was more annoying was that he still had to circle a couple miles away from the entrance to the second level, as he didn't want Micky anywhere near the crowded places. Only after he estimated to have travelled far enough did he call to the bird.

'Over here.'

Luckily, his friend didn't need bridges to navigate the Spire. It only took him around fifteen minutes to reach him. As soon as they had regrouped, Percy activated Soul Vision, looking for the wasps. Sadly, there didn't seem to be any around.

'Can you scout ahead?'

CAW!

Micky didn't need to be told twice, shooting out like an arrow. And hardly another ten minutes passed before Percy received news of two nearby targets on the same mushroom, only a couple bridges away.

'Wait for me. Don't attack them.'

Percy knew Micky could probably handle one of the Starry Workers by himself. He was an Orange beast too, plus he was smarter and had some unique abilities giving him an edge. In fact, he figured they would have to split up in the future, to hunt the creatures more efficiently.

That said, today was their first day, so it was probably unwise to undertake any unnecessary risks before learning more about the bugs. They'd still try fighting individually, but they'd remain close to one another, to intervene if necessary.

'CAW! CAW!'

Micky didn't sound very happy about it. He'd waited two days to get his talons on some tasty snacks fitting for his grade. Still, he listened to the young man, albeit begrudgingly.

Once Percy arrived, he reactivated his Soul Vision, locating their target. The Starry Worker was much larger than the drones. At about the size of a fox, it was still on the smaller side as far as Orange beasts were concerned. Still massive for a bug though. What gave Percy pause was a rather nasty stinger sticking out of the wasp's abdomen. It was longer than his index finger.

'Let's not get stabbed by that.'

CAW!

From what he'd heard, the creatures were venomous. At least, their acid wasn't very potent, so it wouldn't be lethal unless they got hit in a vital area. It'd still be rather unpleasant though.

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Redoubling their caution, they spread out by a few paces, as he took a few deep breaths, drawing the mana to his second core while guiding even more into his channels. Less than a minute later, his muscles were brimming with strength, and his body spilling out mana, as he could practically feel the cyan lines thrumming underneath his skin.

'At least the robes are long-sleeved.'

It was one of the few saving graces of the Guild's uniform. It only left his face and hands exposed and the latter he had fixed by putting on a pair of gloves. Of course, he still very much hoped that nobody would pass through this remote region, but they'd be hunting around here for months. It was best to minimize the risk.

'Let me handle the first one by myself.'

With everything in order, Percy gathered some soul mana in his hand, before tossing the Parting Gift towards the wasp.

It missed.

Although annoyed, the young man wasn't surprised. Unfortunately, the insect wasn't sitting still. It was whizzing around, feeding on the colourful motes falling from the mushrooms above. Naturally, hitting it mid-air had been a long shot.

It also hadn't been subtle. Beasts had keen senses, making it somewhat harder to catch them by surprise. It must have had its Mana Sense active, noticing the translucent dagger flying past it.

BZZZZZZZZZZ

Before Percy knew it, the creature was upon him, and it appeared enraged. It tried to finish him directly by lunging straight towards his throat. It almost succeeded too, as it was faster than expected, making it

difficult to sidestep even with Circulation active. However, it wasn't as hard to divert the stinger with a flick of his Quarterstaff.

SHING

Still, the construct bent and cracked, barely shifting the trajectory of the stab by a couple inches – a bit too close for comfort.

Rotating his right wrist anti-clockwise, Percy tried to use the rebound force from the parry to slam the other end of his weapon on the wasp, but he hit nothing but empty air.

The creature flew around him erratically, looking for another opening to attack.

'It's really annoying.'

Percy's kit was not very suitable against this kind of opponent.

His lack of defensive magic didn't afford him the luxury of blocking hits. He'd lose if he got stabbed even once. Of course, the combination of Circulation and his second core put his reflexes solidly above a regular Orange, meaning he could prevent that if he remained alert.

Still, he didn't exactly have a good means of killing the slippery creature either. His staff was too weak, unless he landed a good blow on the wasp's wings. As for his Parting Gift, it was certainly powerful enough to finish the insect, but it wasn't easy hitting the bug with it. It cost a lot of mana and time for each shot so he couldn't launch it very often either.

'Just stop moving, will you?!'

Twenty minutes and twice as many Parting Gifts later, the wasp was finally dead. The young man was lying on his back, drenched in sweat, his chest heaving up and down.

CAW! CAW!

Percy grimaced, hearing the crow's ridicule.

'What?! Think you can do better?! Why don't you try taking on the other one by yourself then?!'

Another twenty minutes later, it was Micky's turn to lie with his back on the giant mushroom, as Percy stood over him with a grin.

Flying in a straight line, the crow was much faster than the wasp, but that didn't account for the difference in agility. The bug could fly horizontally or vertically too, making it difficult for the familiar to pin it down.

It was also rather dangerous, as the insect's manoeuvrability along with the stinger's greater reach had almost cost Micky dearly a few times. Eventually, Percy had been forced to intervene, taking advantage of the situation to finish the creature.

CAW…

'Yeah, we both suck.' Percy agreed.

Their first two kills on the second level hadn't been easy. It would be a while until they got any good at it.

'Let's try to hunt as many as possible for today.'

Depending on how bad it was, it might be better to stick to the bottom level. The young man sure hoped it wouldn't be necessary, but it would all come down to how much nectar they could harvest here and how much room for improvement there was.

After emptying their spoils into a vial, they took off. Like before, Micky headed out first, scouting for their next target. However, they wouldn't try fighting separately anymore. It might be something worth considering in the future, but Percy understood their best bet for today would be to team up against the bugs.

‘The next 15 hours are going to be soooo much fun…’