Wanderer 66

Chapter 66: Hemarakah

Having been around for nearly two weeks, #13 was Percy's longest-lived clone so far – at least in terms of time inside a body. Of course, he still fell a little short compared to his predecessor's trip on Huehue, but most of that guy's days had been spent shopping for a host, so they hardly counted.

Either way, Percy confirmed once more that his clones were inherently unstable. No matter how peacefully he possessed their bodies or how much soul mana he invested, they wouldn't last long before collapsing. Perhaps it also depended on the circumstances of their deaths. At least when it came to old age, there was only so much he could do to stretch their remaining lifespan.

Consequently, his time observing the primitive village was also nearing its end.

'Not that there's much more to learn here.'

The crystallization technique was straightforward. Percy had only needed a couple days to understand how it was performed and what the effects of the cyan powder were. Essentially, it was a matter of exerting one's control over mana to compress the constructs into a denser state. The locals used their physical strength to supplement their willpower – something he would have an easier time doing due to his second core and Circulation.

That said, this component wasn't necessary. Advancing to a higher grade would naturally make the technique easier, so he estimated he would eventually be able to perform it without getting his hands dirty. Sadly, this simply wasn't an option for the locals.

Either way, the rest of his time had been spent estimating how long he'd need to master the art. It was an important datapoint that would determine whether it was worth focusing on this once he returned home, or whether he was better off waiting until he advanced. And the results were mixed.

'The kids have barely improved since I got here. At this rate, it'll easily take me a year. Maybe longer.'

His only consolation was that he was both more hard-working and healthier than the local children, giving him some hope of integrating the cyan powder into his alchemy before it was time to leave the Guild.

Percy had also grown a little fond of the locals. Every world he had ever experienced had its own share of hardships, but he'd never met anybody as pitiful as these people. The very air they breathed was poison!

The sick girl's situation in particular was a true tragedy. Born at Yellow, she would have enjoyed a long and comfortable life in most places. Here, she was destined to die before reaching adulthood…

'At least these people are kind.'

If this had been any noble House on Remior, her tribemates would have written her off as a hopeless case and left her alone to die a long time ago. But that wasn't what the villagers had done. They seemed to have a policy of devoting all their cyan powder to the person who needed it the most. Many others were also sick, but the old lady kept all her efforts focused on the girl.

Not that it helped much.

"Hemarakah!" her father shouted when she collapsed again.

That was the girl's name as Percy had come to learn. Despite everyone's sacrifices, her episodes had grown both more frequent and more severe. At this point, he wasn't sure if his host would die before she did.

The man brought her to the old lady's hut once more. However, the healer was at a loss. The green concoction was no longer enough to wake the girl up and she couldn't use the powder if she was unconscious. A gloomy mood overcame the small village as a crowd gathered around them. Nobody spoke, but the children's cries and even the occasional sobs of the adults broke the sombre silence.

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As Hemarakah's breaths slowed down and whatever was left of her core began to dim, her father grew even more desperate. Grabbing his daughter, he began shaking her, trying to wake her up. Another person had to intervene to stop him.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!!!" the grieving father's guttural scream was the most heart-wrenching sound Percy had heard in any of his lives.

Someone patted the man's back, trying to console him. He didn't react. He just stared at his unconscious daughter, his body trembling. He was either unwilling to miss her final moments, or unable to accept they were forthcoming.

Suddenly, he stopped shaking. Raising his head, the man looked at Percy. His eyes were bloodshot, a crazy glint shining in his pupils. But there was something else there too.

Hope.

Leaping to his feet, the father sprinted towards him, before falling to his knees right underneath the floating clone.

"Sah kar, el di kin! Di kin!!" he screamed, his voice cracking.

Percy didn't understand the words, of course, but it wasn't that hard to infer their meaning.

'Is there anything I can do?'

Truth be told, he still didn't know the full extent of his species' abilities. Could they do more than just filtering the air?

The old lady soon approached the man, trying to pull him away.

He resisted.

“Di kin!! Di kin!!!” he kept yelling.

He knocked his head on the ground over and over, a trickle of blood flowing down his forehead, mixing with tears on his chin. The sight made Percy wince, especially considering these people had an eye on their foreheads.

Exhaling, Percy floated down, gently stopping him with his paw. He then made his way to the girl. Her life was already hanging by a thread. Percy had no idea if he could help, but what was there to lose?

‘Worst case scenario, I fail. Both of us are dying anyway.’

Patting Hemarakah’s arm, he quickly noted it was cold. He already knew her sternum was filled with the brown mist. The question was how to get it out of her core.

‘Any insight you’re willing to share?’ Percy asked his host.

The original owner of his body had remained silent over the past two weeks. He wasn’t sure if he was still even there.

Against all odds, a response came through!

Foreign thoughts soon crossed Percy’s mind. He suddenly had some idea of what he was supposed to do.

‘Alright. Here goes nothing.’

Looking at the girl’s father who’d already joined him by now, he gestured for him to open his daughter’s mouth. He then lowered his own, before softly inhaling, focusing his Mana Sense on her core.

Nothing happened.

Percy drew a second breath and then a third, in a desperate race against time. Every moment risked being Hemarakah's last.

A dark wisp emerged. It was the thickest, deepest brown he'd seen since coming to this world. It was even denser than the clouds above, or the vents spewing the poison into the air.

Another wisp followed, as the girl's core stopped dimming.

A wet cough escaped her throat, as a viscous sludge splattered all over Percy's face. Part of him flinched, wanting to move away from the discharge. Another part of him, however, the one stemming from his host's instincts, prodded him to remain in place. If the brown fog tasted like strawberry juice, the sticky liquid was more akin to strawberry jam, its flavour heavenly to his alien tastebuds.

'I'm not sure if this is the best thing I've ever eaten, or the most gross. Probably both.'

Either way, the girl kept improving the more of the substance he extracted from the core, as the Yellow light burned brighter with every breath.

"HAHAHAHAHA!!!" the father burst into joyous laughter, as the rest of the villagers erupted into cheers.

A few minutes later, Hemarakah had the healthiest core he had seen since coming here, but Percy didn't stop just yet.

'If I'm going to do this, I might as well clean it up completely.'

He kept going, until the core was restored to over 80% of its full capacity, when something unexpected happened. Amidst the bright Yellow glow, a faint Green strand emerged, causing Percy to raise an eyebrow, as the locals gasped and exclaimed in awe.

'Don't tell me…'

Intensifying his efforts, he took breath after breath, as more poison was sucked out of the girl's core and more strands of Green appeared, one after another, until they began to dominate. By the time Hemarakah coughed out the last drop of sludge out of her throat, a Green core thrummed with power in her chest!

'Holy shit. The poison must contain beast mana.'

It clearly wasn't pure like the nectar they had on Remior, as even the beasts he'd encountered were suffering from the poison. His species were the only ones equipped to fully process the substance. The mana was also rather thin, as it wasn't visible through Mana Sense. Still, it had to be there, as that was the only explanation for Hemarakah's advancement.

"Kerez dim laat!!" the man said, drawing Percy's attention.

His daughter soon echoed his words. Nodding, Percy then looked at the rest of the villagers, noticing all their eyes were sparkling as they gazed at him.

He chuckled.

'Oh well, I suppose I still have a few hours left.'