Wanderer 73

Chapter 73: House Tantalus

Entering his room, Percy gobbled up his Honey Roll swiftly, before taking a quick shower. Only after he was done with today's chores did he allow himself to sink into his bed, finally taking the letter out of its envelope.

'Huh, talk about going all out.' he chuckled.

The penmanship was immaculate, and the light indigo paper smelled of lavender. His cousin had clearly poured a lot of effort into this.

'Dear Percy,

I hope this letter finds you well! No, really! You left without even saying goodbye and haven't bothered writing in over two years! To the point we aren't even sure you made it to the Guild safely! So, if you are reading this – thank Phoebe! – but also, please know you are a massive jerk…'

'Ouch.'

Elaine's scathing words stung, but Percy couldn't exactly argue against them. At the very least, he should have let her and baldy know he was alright.

'Well, it's not like you wrote me either!'

Still, he decided to contact them more frequently from now on, before diving back to the letter.

'…Now that we got that out of the way, I wanted to bring you up to date on our House's news. One of my missions ended really badly right around the time you left. Our cousin, Aleyn, passed away.

But I don't want you to worry about me. Things were a little rough for a while, but I'm doing much better now. I managed to upgrade my Whip spell, and I recently perfected those dance moves you showed me too. Oh, and my mother is expecting! I'm going to be a sister in a few months!...'

Percy nodded. He didn't really know Aleyn that well, but he could tell his death still weighed heavily on Elaine's conscience.

'I should ask baldy about the details the next time we meet.'

Either way, the rest of his cousin's news were much more positive. The 'dance moves' she mentioned were obviously code for Circulation. Percy wasn't sure how secure these letters were, but Elaine clearly wasn't willing to take any chances – which suited him just fine.

That meant she had at least two Refined spells listed in her Status now. That ought to have made her a force to be reckoned with. Even without a bloodline, he doubted any noble their age would be a match for her.

However, the letter wasn't over yet.

'…Broadly speaking, things have been peaceful around here – although House Tantalus is beginning to stir up trouble again. They've already messed with a few of our people out on missions. Thankfully, they haven't done anything too drastic yet, but grandpa thinks it's only a matter of time before they escalate…'

'House Tantalus…' Percy gritted his teeth.

Those were the same people who'd attacked them when he was young. The ones who'd killed his parents. He didn't know what exactly the deal was between the two Houses. It seemed to be a complicated mix of an old grudge, territorial disputes and also some drama around their bloodline. But yeah, it didn't take a genius to figure out why Elaine had decided to contact him all of a sudden.

'…So, I just wanted to warn you against travelling by yourself anytime soon. Definitely not to our House, but also in general. Ever since that god's announcement, all the noble families have gone crazy.

Commoners too, actually. From what I hear, a lot of people are turning into bandits, hoping to kidnap somebody important to trade for one of the petals…'

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This was in line with Orin's speculations.

'Well, it's not like I was planning to leave soon. There should still be over three years left until the lotus blooms. Besides, I can get an escort back if I need it.'

Elaine's next words corroborated that.

'…That's not to say you shouldn't visit! According to Grandpa, you'll be safe if you travel with the Guild's envoys. Nobody in their right mind would attack them…'

Due to the widespread need for elixirs, most noble Houses had frequent dealings with the alchemists. Percy knew his own family needed thousands of doses per month, so a group of Blue cores was given the job of delivering them three times a year.

No bandit group had the power to mess with such a force. In theory, a rival House could, but none of them were dumb enough to try. Attacking the Guild's people was tantamount to declaring war on all of Remior. Sadly, the next delivery had been months away back when Micky advanced, so Percy had chosen to take the risk rather than waiting.

Returning to the letter, Percy quickly noted it contained some more coded messages.

'…Finally, we'd like to know how you're doing. Have you been able to dive into alchemy yet? Grandpa has been feeling guilty we couldn't give you the elixirs you wanted back home. He says he'll figure out a way to convince the rest of the family if you still need them.

Also, he said he'll take some time off his schedule to brew your favourite tea if you want. In any case, make sure to keep in touch this time!

Lots of love,

Elaine'

'My favourite tea, huh?'

Percy grinned. Naturally, he had nothing of the sort. Baldy was clearly talking about the petals. He should have realized Percy would want one, and he was subtly telling him he'd try to make it happen.

'Still, it won't be easy for him.'

If it was that simple, Percy wouldn't have needed to travel all the way to the Alchemists' Guild for elixirs – not to mention something as miraculous as the petals. But Archibald obviously understood this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so he didn't want his grandson to miss it.

Percy felt a fuzzy sensation in his chest. Having people who genuinely cared for him was a novel feeling. Though it did exacerbate his guilt over not contacting them sooner. That said…

'I'm not as helpless as I used to be.'

His relatives' intentions were good, but they had no idea how much he had progressed over the past two years.

He wasn't powerful enough to travel around the world freely, but he could still handle the average bandit group in a direct confrontation. If he ran into someone like Rick and his goons, he was confident he could beat them without relying on his familiar or resorting to a sneak attack this time.

Percy could brew his own elixirs too, although he had yet to find a way to do it away from the Guild. The nectar wasn't exported outside the Fungal Spire, so he'd lose his main source of income once he left. Still, if he succeeded in creating a wasp familiar, he could fix that too. Even when it came to the petals, he already had something in mind.

‘I can trade Circulation for it.’

It wasn’t perfect, but it would be easier than exchanging it for elixirs. While a petal was more valuable, it was also a single-use consumable. He just had to convince one of the three recipients to part with it. It was better than handing the spell to everyone in his House’s management and getting them to keep giving him elixir forever. In the latter case, he’d also have to reveal his second core, and his secrets were more likely to leak the more people he told.

‘Galahad will probably get one.’

The man had a lightning affinity, which could be elevated to acid with the petal. His status in the family was the highest too. Still, as much of a prick as he was, he’d probably recognize that Circulation would help him more. Especially if Percy managed to figure the final step of the technique.

‘If not him, one of the other two will agree for sure.’

There was also the cyan powder. Getting another Violet core sooner would be massive for his family. Though Percy would rather not spend the next seventy years of his life feeding his uncle the cyan paste twice a day.

‘At least, I have options now.’

He also had plenty of time to decide.

Shrugging, he quickly searched through his cupboards for something to write with, eager to get back to his cousin. He did manage to find a quill and a half-empty bottle of ink. Remnants from the previous owner of the house obviously, as he’d never bought any. Percy confirmed the ink was still usable, when he realized he didn’t have anything to write on.

‘I mean… I COULD write on the back of Elaine’s letter…’

He smiled wryly, before shooting the idea down. There was definitely enough space there, but it would be crass of him.

‘Don’t do it Percy... Don’t be a Nesha. Let’s just buy some paper tomorrow.’