Wanderer 78

Chapter 78: Blessing

‘You mean I get to keep this after you’re gone?!’ Gabe asked.

‘I imagine so, assuming you survive. After all, it’s already taken root inside your body. Though it’s hard to say for sure. I’ve never come this far with one of my hosts.’ Percy replied.

Gabe frowned.

‘But I don’t feel any different.’

‘That’s because it’s still inactive. As soon as you fill it up for the first time, you’ll experience an all-around improvement – not unlike a promotion. If we’re lucky, it might even help us fix your soul. Its effect should be significant too, since it’s only one grade lower than your first core.’

Saying that, Percy felt a little envious of his new pal. Why did Gabe’s second core start off at Yellow, when he had to climb from the very bottom?

‘Are you a Yellow-born by any chance?’

Gabe nodded absentmindedly, apparently lost in thought. Confirming his guess, Percy wasn’t very happy. All three of his datapoints suggested one’s second core began at the same grade as their first. It meant Micky’s would be Red too. In any case, that was his main body’s problem. Right now, his job was to make the most of his time here. Thinking of something, he turned to Gabe again.

‘How do you guys discover your affinity?’

It should be more complicated without a Status or Phoebe’s tests…

‘How else? If it’s not a common element, we buy a book on rare affinities and find which one matches.’

Ok, that didn't sound very difficult. Percy couldn't help but wonder why they didn't have books like that back on Remior. Then again, all the important people got tested for free. Besides, listing their grades and affinities was nothing more than a convenience. The main purpose of the Status was to help them develop their spells.

Shrugging, he pulled Gabe's information again, eager to read the rest.

Gabriel (Percival's clone)

Mana cores:

Bloodline:

Blessing:

Spells:

Decrees:

Most of it was as expected.

Percy was happy his new understanding of Decrees was reflected in his Status. It might not seem like a big deal that a couple of question marks had been replaced by words, but it was massive. He now knew what to look for during his travels. After all, these divine perks were some of the most valuable things he could obtain.

What shocked him the most, however, was the blessing. It finally explained the odd colour and increased potency of his host's flames, but that wasn't what surprised Percy. He didn't need to ask what a blessing was, as they actually had them back on Remior. No, what left him flabbergasted was what it implied about Gabe's heritage.

‘You’re the son of a god?!’

It was the only way to obtain a blessing. A god’s offspring wasn’t much different from a mortal’s. Their grade, affinity and bloodline were still determined based on the same rules as everyone else’s, and with the same rates.

Their only advantage was the chance of inheriting a blessing. For that to happen, they needed to share the affinity of their divine parent and, even then, it wasn’t guaranteed. If they got lucky enough to inherit one, it essentially allowed them to passively tap into one of the concepts their parent had mastered, permanently empowering their magic.

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In Gabe’s case, it turned his flames hotter, but that wasn’t the only blessing one could inherit from a fire god. Somebody else might have flames that spread more easily or lasted longer. Each element was associated with multiple concepts, though a mortal could only ever possess a single blessing.

‘It’s not a big deal. Nearly everyone in our world has at least one divine parent. We mortals are forbidden from procreating amongst ourselves.’

The revelation left Percy flabbergasted.

‘What?! Why?!’

Gabe shrugged.

‘I suppose it’s about time I told you what sort of place you’ve found yourself on, since you don’t seem to have the slightest clue… Welcome to the Vault of Magic! The largest artificial world in the cosmos!’

‘Artificial?!’

Gabe sighed.

‘Let me explain on the way to my place. It’s been a long day – considering I died and everything.’

Gabe walked to a wall, as a few symbols shined brighter, forming the outline of a square.

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By the time he reached it, a burst of steam spewed out of its edges, the thick slab of metal sinking into the floor, allowing them to leave the room.

The sight outside was unlike anything Percy had ever seen. They found themselves inside an even bigger cube – this one downright colossal. Its sides were so far away they appeared blurry, the walls taller than mountains. The top of the room was closed too, the ceiling akin to a sky of grey metal. Countless inscriptions decorated the structure’s surfaces like stars.

Percy spotted many of the smaller cubes around him, similar to the one they’d just exited. A few people queued up in front of each, probably waiting for their turn to start a challenge. Gabe ignored them, as he began walking.

‘This place started off as a small research facility. Our founder, Metatron, was a god who abandoned his original world, having grown tired of the wars and politics. His only wish was to uncover the secrets of magic. Anything else, he viewed as a distraction.’

Over the next few minutes, Gabe explained the Vault’s history to Percy. Apparently, this Metatron possessed a space affinity, and was pretty good with it too. He originally hid the Vault in some remote corner of the universe. Finding it was no easy task, and even the few times it was spotted, it hadn’t been too difficult to move it elsewhere. Away from everyone, the god was free to continue his research in peace, spending countless millennia holed up in his humble abode.

Eventually, something changed.

At some point, Metatron grew powerful enough to finally cast a Decree, making him the Vault's first titan. It allowed him to grant others access to the Vault, letting them open a portal to the artificial world from anywhere across the universe.

That moment marked the beginning of the Vault's rapid expansion. Through the Decree, it was possible to recruit more gods without compromising the world's safety. After all, they could enter it even while it was hidden or on the move. The portals were one-way too, so it was much easier to join than leave.

Not that it was impossible for a god to exit if they really wanted, but that was beside the point. Even then, they wouldn't necessarily know the location of the Vault, and by the time they had the chance to betray Metatron, he would have long moved it elsewhere and revoked their access.

'It's ingenious!' Percy said.

'Yes.' Gabe nodded. 'Giving people the ability to open a portal isn't as direct a boon as a bloodline or second core. Not exactly what comes to mind when you think of a Decree. Still, its impact is undeniable. It functioned as an extra layer of security, allowing the Vault to become what it is today.'

Of course, that was not to say Metatron didn't vet his peers the good old way too. He had to use all the means at his disposal – both mundane and magical – since many of them came from shady backgrounds. Some were criminals, exiled from their own worlds. Many were refugees with nowhere to go after their homes were destroyed or conquered. Only a few were researchers at heart, sharing his own passion for magic.

'Well, that certainly explains the diversity of races here.' Percy noted.

On their way to his host's house, they saw people of all sorts. They ranged from Gabe's own species, to hulking humanoids twice his height with two horns sticking out their temples. There were even some green-skinned folks with pointy ears who barely reached his knees, scurrying about like kids.

'The gods didn't start having children until much later though.' Gabe explained.

Through all his security measures, Metatron had ensured the Vault's safety, as more and more gods joined. Many of them brought new knowledge with them, helping him upgrade and expand the artificial

world, until it became the marvel of magical technology it was today. Of course, it still paled in comparison to a natural world, in both size and content. Though they did eventually manage to implement a habitat that could support a larger population of mortals.

'But that still doesn't explain why you have this weird rule about procreating.' Percy said.

'Huh, that's because you have yet to understand what we are to our parents…' Gabe chuckled bitterly.

They reached another cube, much larger than the one they had undergone the challenge in. Gabe pressed his hand on its surface, as a circle lit up around it.

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A moment later, the metal parted like before, letting them inside. Gabe walked through a relatively narrow corridor. It was wide enough for them, but Percy guessed the horned creatures would probably have to crouch to fit. Every time they came across a resident, they had to squeeze against the walls to pass each other.

Percy didn't miss the faint square indentations tightly packed along the walls, guessing they were probably doors. Several corridors and flights of stairs later, they eventually stopped before one, pressing their hand on its cold surface once more.

Gabe's room was tiny. It was actually smaller than Micky's cell on Huehue!

There was a bed, barely large enough for him. Right next to it, there was a toilet and a shower, with nothing but a thin glass panel to shield the rest of the room from the moisture.

'We are not products of love. We aren't even treated as people… Our parents only see us as a resource for their experiments.'