Wanderer 86

Chapter 86: BUMP

The moment Percy was dragged out of Gabe's body, and before he had the chance to pick up much speed, something strange happened.

BUMP

'What the hell was that? Did I hit something, or did something else collide with me?'

It was weird because the only things he had ever interacted with in this disembodied state had been other souls. Plus, it had always been him running into them – if not intentionally then at least knowingly. Though he didn't think much of it, continuing on his way to Remior, not feeling any different after the collision.

Instead, his thoughts were occupied by his recent experiences in the Vault. While the place was positively rich with magical secrets, Percy had only managed to scratch the tip of the iceberg. Magiscript was arguably the Vault's most valuable art, but he had lacked the funds and the time to study it too deeply. After all, he couldn't have asked his dying friend to waste his limited credits on books and tutorials for his sake.

'That stingy jellyfish wouldn't have agreed anyway…'

Consequently, leaving without learning how to inscribe a single rune was Percy's second greatest regret in this trip, only narrowly beaten by the bittersweet ending of Gabe's challenge. However, that was not to say he was without gains.

'I can't wait to apply everything we've learned about the Moirai!'

And soon enough, the wisp was back in its rightful body, the two sets of memories now blending into each other. The process took a little longer than usual, probably due to the greater volume of divergent memories he had to sift through. In fact, the memories themselves were fine – it wasn't very difficult to logically arrange them. The bigger issue were the emotions.

As it turned out, Percy's clone and main body had developed some distinct feelings during their time apart, some of them even in conflict with one another. For example, the main body had spent several months compressing crystals, brewing elixirs and working on the new recipe with Orin. Suffice to say, he'd grown a little fed up with alchemy by now. On the other hand, the clone had begun to miss it after the long vacation.

So now that the two minds fused once more, Percy had to deal with all sorts of concurrent incongruities like that. By the time he was done, his head was throbbing, as he rested weakly on his bed. Only now did he remember it was the middle of the night. The clone's return had woken him up.

'Well, better than collapsing in Orin's house, I suppose.'

All in all, there had been plenty of interesting developments on both sides, so Percy planned to spend tomorrow rethinking his priorities. For now, he figured there was no better starting point than reading his Status.

Percival Avalon

Mana cores:

Bloodline:

Spells:

Decrees:

Percy's eyes widened upon reaching the end of his Status, the new words carrying some shocking implications.

'When did this happen?!'

He and Gabe had checked their Status a few hours before starting the last wave of the challenge. The new Decree definitely hadn't been there at the time. More importantly, this was something targeting Percy specifically, having followed him all the way home!

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'It must be what bumped into me right when I was leaving!'

But what did this mean?!

Obviously, their secrets had been exposed to the upper echelons of the Vault! Their hopes of hiding under the noses of a bunch of gods, while having all sorts of unusual interactions with the Vault's system had obviously been way too optimistic!

'Shit, what's going to happen now? Am I even safe here?!'

Percy's heartbeat quickened, as all sorts of catastrophic scenarios flashed through his mind. A few minutes later, he realized panic wasn't helping, so he grabbed his shaking wrist to calm himself down. Only now did he register his bedsheets were stuck to his skin, drenched in cold sweat.

'Let's not jump to conclusions… Metatron has clearly opted for a softer approach…'

The titan could have chosen to appear before Percy at any point, forcibly capturing him, or performing all sorts of experiments on him against his will. Instead, he had remained silent, waiting for him to leave before passing him what was essentially an invitation.

'But why?!'

The guy wasn't some sort of saint! Metatron was a callous man who had crafted one of the most brutal worlds Percy had ever heard of! Why would he care about the feelings of some random mortal?!

Though, thinking about it from the god's perspective, it did make sense. The most precious thing his clones possessed was the Moirais' Decree. Of course, that was plenty valuable in and of itself, but Percy wasn't sure if Metatron could have snatched it by force.

Maybe they could have tried extracting his soul from Gabe and placing it into a different body. However, he wasn't sure that would have worked. Perhaps he couldn't possess another body without using his ability first, or maybe they couldn't have fused his soul with somebody else's without his consent.

Either way, it would have been a gamble. They'd have risked everything to maybe grant one more person a second core. But had they failed, they would have lost their chance forever.

However, Percy's main body possessed something far more valuable – the very bloodline making all this possible in the first place! If they could get their hands on him, they could pass the Moirais' Decree to as many people as they wanted! And who knew what else they could do with it?!

'This is still a gamble on his part though. The rewards are higher, but so is the risk…'

Percy could always choose not to go. In that case, Metatron would lose everything. In fact, as much as he wanted to check up on his friend and to uncover more of the Vault's knowledge, Percy would be a fool to even consider it. These people treated their own children as disposable experiments! Who would be stupid enough to willingly place themselves at their mercy?!

'But Metatron isn't an idiot. He obviously knows I would feel this way. Just what is his angle?'

Did he think Percy would eventually get into a situation where he'd have to use the Decree? It was possible… After all, he was just a weak mortal. He wouldn't risk his life when he was safe, but what if he found himself cornered by a powerful enemy? Possible death was better than certain death, wasn't it? Did Metatron count on that happening sooner or later?

'Unless he doesn't even care about that. What if the Decree lets him do something else, like invading Remior at will?'

The possibility sent a shiver down Percy's spine, but he quickly shook his head. It shouldn't be that easy. If it were, Metatron would have taken over the universe already. Besides, even if he could invade, it

wasn't like Percy could do much to stop him. He had no idea how to get rid of the Decree and he wasn't selfless enough to kill himself or spill the beans to the Divine Order…

'Actually, that might be what he wants me to do!'

How would the gods react if they were to learn about all this? Perhaps, their safest bet would be to execute him on the spot. If things developed in such a way, he might be forced to escape to the Vault in desperation.

'It's best not to do anything rash. I don't think I'm in any immediate danger.'

In fact, Gabe was the one in trouble…

'Shit! Gabe! Is he going to be alright?!'

While Percy was by far the most valuable of the two, Gabe was still an important test subject. After all, Percy had already given him the Decree. Could his children inherit his second core? If so, Percy could see the Vault's gods forcing Gabe to sire a lot of kids.

'Hopefully the Decree doesn't propagate like that…'

They could also try snatching it from him the same way Percy had passed it along in the first place. Though that was likely impossible. If this hadn't been a unique feature of the Clone bloodline, other races would have long stolen it from the Moirai. Soul affinities were rare, yes, but still abundant at the cosmic scale. It was the combination of Percy's affinity and bloodline that was probably unprecedented.

'With any luck, they'll treat him as a valuable asset.'

It wasn't hard to imagine. The Vault's deities were certainly self-centred, but also logical. Gabe had already been a Yellow-born with a blessing and a useful bloodline before Percy's interference. He was one of the chosen few they had kept around in the first place.

Now, his value had gone up again. Perhaps they'd treat him kindly, investing in him rather than squeezing him dry of all he was worth. And not just due to his own potential, but also as a bargaining chip to use against Percy in the future.

'Either way, I can't do anything about it as I am.'

Percy couldn't help but lament his powerlessness once again. And it was more pronounced than ever before, now that he found himself opposite a titan of all people. But at least, Metatron didn't seem like he was planning to move against him directly anytime soon. He was probably playing the long game. Or at least, Percy had no alternative but to assume as much.

Thinking of a possibility, he grinned.

'Then, I guess I can play games too.'