Wanderer 92

Chapter 92: Negotiations

Nesha remained holed up in her house for a couple hours, much to the crowd's dismay. She did walk out eventually, casually strolling towards the building next door, yawning along the way. Everyone but Percy quickly masked the frustration in their expressions, unwilling to risk pissing her off.

As eager as Percy was to approach her, he decided to blend with the others at first, waiting patiently for the opportune moment. Nesha finally opened the gambling den, letting her customers inside. Only after everyone was sitting at different tables, engaging in various games involving dice or cards did Percy grab the chance to talk to her.

"About that thing I mentioned earlier–" he started saying, before she interrupted him.

"You're really keen on this, aren't you?" she rolled her eyes.

Percy frowned.

"Shouldn't you be too? I told you it's going to be worth your time. And you know I'm telling the truth."

"I know you believe that. If I had a brown chip every time somebody made a similar claim, I wouldn't have needed to open the gambling den in the first place."

Realizing she was going to take some convincing, and also understanding this wasn't the place to make a scene, Percy opted for a subtler approach. He handed her a small pouch, before speaking.

"Look, words are cheap. Open it when you're back at home and try out the thing inside. In private. I swear it's safe. I've included instructions on how to use it. We'll discuss the rest later."

Seeing her accept it, Percy left the building. He genuinely had no clue how Nesha would react to the new elixir. Its value would definitely speak for itself, but that still wasn't a guarantee she'd be willing to collaborate with him. Perhaps, she wouldn't want to take the risk, or she'd be too lazy to bother.

‘Nothing ventured, nothing gained, I suppose…’

Returning home, he spent the rest of the day compressing crystals. It appeared he could only keep Synchronization active for a couple hours at a time. That said, he estimated he could use it three times per day, assuming they were adequately spaced apart. Taking everything into account, he calculated how many doses of the new elixir he could brew per day. He needed to figure that out before discussing specifics with Nesha.

‘My yield with the regular elixirs has increased to 31% over the past year…’

The improvement was minuscule, though that was to be expected, as gains truly slowed down past 30%. Still, that meant his yield was a little under 68% for every one of the three steps. Each brewing session currently took him around 40 minutes. However, all those numbers would change drastically if he brewed the new elixirs from scratch, as the recipe involved five steps now. That meant his overall yield would drop to 14% and each batch would take over an hour.

Percy quickly shook his head.

‘No. That would be a waste of time. I’ll ditch the first three steps.’

If he bought pre-brewed elixirs to use as his materials instead of nectar, he’d only have to go through the last two steps. A quick calculation revealed his yield would climb to over 45% that way, and he could cut the brewing time to under half an hour.

Of course, it would cost him much more, but he guessed that would ultimately be negligible in the grand scheme of things, as the new steps would be the most profitable ones by far. That way, he could start with 400 drops of regular elixir and 4 cyan crystals every session, ending up with about 180 drops of the new product. And he could do that twice an hour.

‘So, if I also take into account the time needed to actually condense the crystals, I can probably brew about 19 doses per day.’

That wasn't too bad. He currently needed 6 for himself, though that might go up to 9 depending on what Micky's second affinity ended up being. The rest he could sell.

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'Hmmm... Let's not sell all of it. I also need to build myself a stash for when I leave the Guild.'

Making up his mind, Percy was about to head off to Freddy's, when somebody knocked on his door, startling him.

'Moment of truth…' he thought, crossing his fingers.

Rarely getting visitors, he knew it was either Nesha here to make a deal, or an official of the Guild here because she ratted him out. Opening the door, he was relieved to see it was the former. In fact, she looked a little different to how she usually did, her expression being a touch brighter, an ambitious glint noticeable in her eyes. Percy couldn't help but smile, realizing she had taken the bait, when a mischievous idea crossed his mind. Perhaps, he should slam the door in her face, to get back at her for earlier.

'Nah, let's not antagonize the eccentric girl now that she's finally onboard…'

Still, it was difficult to keep the smugness out of his voice.

"Well, I take it you're interested all of a sudden?"

Nesha ignored him, rolling her eyes. She shoved him inside before letting herself into the house, closing the door behind her.

"Do you have any idea what this means?!"

This was Percy's first time hearing actual excitement in her tone.

“Duh, why do you think I came to you?” he asked back.

Nesha let the response sink in for a couple of seconds, before walking over to Percy’s kitchen and plopping down on a chair. She then crossed one leg over the other before speaking again.

“Who else knows about this?”

Percy shrugged.

“My alchemy mentor helped me perfect the recipe, but he’s promised to stay quiet for the next twenty years. I can brew them by myself.”

Nesha nodded.

“You do realize what you’re asking of me, right? It’s not easy smuggling anything out of the Guild, let alone something like this. You need to pull all sorts of strings to make this happen. And that’s just to get them out of the settlement. Let’s not even mention the difficulty involved in finding a rich, reliable customer.”

Percy grabbed another chair, setting it a couple metres in front of Nesha before joining her.

“Can you make it happen, or not?”

She grinned.

“I want 50%.”

But Percy failed to suppress a chuckle.

“Talk about a rip off. I’m the one who has to spend all day in a lab. 30%.”

“No way. It’s really time consuming on my end too. 40%.”

Percy shook his head.

“You can’t do this without me, but I can do it without you.”

“Need I remind you that I can tell when you lie?” she smiled.

“Fine. I admit I don’t have any other options available right now. Still, I can take my sweet time finding somebody else. Good luck reinventing the recipe by yourself.” Percy didn’t back down.

Though Nesha was clearly just as stubborn.

“You won’t find a better middleman than me. Even ignoring my bloodline, I have connections to the Asclepius House.”

Percy raised an eyebrow.

The Asclepius House was one of the 7 Great Houses. Their prestige aside, one of their most important traits was they possessed a lot of people with the Memory Bank bloodline. It allowed them to freely manipulate or even erase their own memories.

One of the House’s most valuable assets was a specially trained order known as the Oblivious Agents. They could execute a sensitive task and then erase all memory of it afterwards, thus eliminating all trails leading back to the one who commissioned it.

If Percy and Nesha went through them to contact their potential buyer, they would more easily keep themselves anonymous, cutting their losses in case they got betrayed. Not to mention that she could also use her own bloodline to ensure they didn’t cheat her.

“Fine, 35% and we have a deal.” Percy conceded.

“35% is just my share.” she emphasized. “Keep in mind that hiring an Oblivious Agent is going to cost us a lot too.”

Percy wasn’t happy to hear that, but he knew she was telling the truth.

“How much do you think the elixirs can even sell for?”

“Beats me.” Nesha admitted. “If I was free to auction them all over Remior, they could easily sell a hundred times more than the regular ones.”

“That much?!” Percy was shocked.

He knew it was a big deal, but that was still more than his estimates. After all, they could only be used three times as often.

“These things don’t scale linearly. It’s a premium item. Do you have any idea how many people would fight over them? Imagine how much money somebody close to Violet would be willing to spend to save themselves a few centuries.”

Percy swallowed a lump of saliva as he pondered the implications. It was true. It wasn’t easy to put a price tag on something that could save a noble House from the verge of extinction, or even elevate them to a Great House.

“But you can’t auction them freely, can you?” he caught the caveat in her words.

“Naturally not.” she said, exhaling in disappointment. “If I did that, everyone who lost the auction would just publicize the elixirs to get back at us. Needless to say, everything would go to shit at that point. I need to investigate potential candidates and only approach those I think will pay the most.”

“So how much do you think we can make?” Percy asked again.

She shrugged.

“It’s hard to say before doing my due research. We can’t push too far given the circumstances. Still, I guess it shouldn’t be too difficult to sell them for over a dozen times as much as the regular elixirs.”

Percy nodded. That was a lot of money. Even after keeping most doses to himself and taking out Nesha’s share and the rest of their expenses, it would still be enough to afford Micky’s potions after a few months.

“Very well.” he said, extending his hand. “But I’ll need your help with a couple more things.”