Wanderer 96

Chapter 96: Happy 20!!!

‘Dear Percy,

Forgive me if this is not the exact day – as I’m not sure when the letter will find you, but…

Happy 20!!!...’

Percy paused for a moment, calculating the date. With everything going on, he’d honestly forgotten about his birthday, which had actually been a couple days ago.

‘Close enough.’ he shrugged, returning to the message.

‘…I wanted to bake you a cake, though I wasn’t sure it would survive the trip. I suppose we’ll have to add it to those I owe you – what is it, three now? I can’t believe you’ve been gone for so long already…’

GRUMBLE

‘Ugh… a cake would be lovely right about now…’ he thought, grabbing his aching stomach.

His arguably spoiled dinner hadn’t done much to fill him up, but that didn’t stop it from stirring a storm in there, preparing for its prison break.

‘…In any case, I hope you remember to take a day off to celebrate. Being so hard-working is definitely one of your better traits, but everyone needs some downtime once in a while…’

Percy chuckled. Even after all those years, his cousin knew him so well.

‘I did take a break today though! Well… sort of.’

Training on the Spire wasn't exactly relaxing, but it was fun. He fully intended to negotiate with Nesha about properly weaving it into his timetable – at least once or twice a month. As nice as it was to make money, his new trick wouldn't master itself.

'…In other news, my mom gave birth a few weeks ago! I have a baby brother now! We're calling him Owain! He's really cute too – I can't wait for you to meet him! He doesn't have our blue hair, so we think he might not have dad's water affinity, but the jury is still out on earth. As for the bloodline… I suppose we won't be sure until he's five, but it doesn't tend to resurface after skipping a generation either…'

Reading Elaine's words, Percy couldn't help but revisit what he'd recently learned about Decrees. It was technically possible for children on Remior to awaken their cores before taking the affinity test, though it was exceedingly rare. The very contact with Phoebe's mana seemed to not only give them access to their Status, but also catalyse their cores – or something – allowing them to discover them and begin filling them up.

'What did people do before Phoebe became a titaness? Did kids have to get older to tap into their magic?'

Either way, Percy sure hoped his new cousin wouldn't be a Red-born like him. Granted, the odds weren't on the baby's side, though his life would certainly be a lot easier if he got lucky.

YAWN

'Ok, maybe this isn't the time to contemplate life's great questions. Let's just read the rest and go to sleep…'

'…I'd honestly prefer to end the letter here, as I don't want to sour your birthday with bad news… However, it's probably best that you're aware of what's going on around here…'

Sensing the shift in tone, Percy couldn't help but perk up a little.

'…Long story short, House Tantalus has grown even more aggressive. Their goons have begun crossing river Glein and attacking members of our House. They've already killed two people, kidnapped three

more and injured about a dozen – to various extents. Most of them I don't think you knew very well, but Hector is dead…'

Percy's eyes widened. His relationship to that cousin of his had never been great – the older boy having mocked and bullied him his whole life. Still, Percy had never wished him such a grim fate.

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'These bastards are really pushing it…' he gritted his teeth.

In normal times, House Tantalus wouldn't have gone so far. Though they'd gained the upper hand since their raid a few decades ago, the two families' strength wasn't that far apart. Typically, they would have laid low, dealing a blow whenever a good opportunity presented itself, yet without escalating the conflict too fast, risking an all-out war. After all, such a development wouldn't benefit either party.

'It's probably because of the petals. They want to chip away at our House so they can more easily pressure us when the time comes.'

Part of Percy wanted to return and help. While he didn't get along with all his relatives, there were people back home he did care about. However, he also knew he couldn't do much as he was. He might have grown enough to hold his own against anyone at Yellow, but a noble House of that size had scores upon scores of people at Green.

'…In any case, you don't need to worry about us. Their Blue cores are too valuable to be sent out on such low-level skirmishes, and I'm not afraid of anyone below that. Also, grandpa isn't one to take this lying down either. So far, he's remained passive to avoid throwing more oil in the fire, but enough's enough. The other day, I overheard him talking about retaliating.

So yeah… We'll be fine. Just please, please, PLEASE, don't try returning home on your own! Wait for the envoys if you really want to come. Other than that – we can't wait to have you back!

Happy birthday again,

Elaine’

It was probably true. She should be able to handle herself against any of their juniors, thanks to Circulation. Even those with the bloodline.

‘But only if it’s a one on one…’

They couldn’t count on those scumbags to play fair, so he certainly hoped baldy was keeping an eye on his granddaughter.

Folding the letter, he placed it in a drawer with the rest. Percy wasn’t the most sentimental guy, but he’d kept all of their correspondence. He didn’t really have many other possessions anyway – other than his alchemy equipment. Then, he let his head sink back into the pillow.

His current plan was to spend another couple of years in the Guild, raising his and Micky’s strength some more. He’d only leave a few months before the lotus bloomed, to compete for a petal.

‘I need to start preparing though… I guess I should try that soon…’

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A couple more weeks went by without any hiccups. Luckily Nesha had managed to strike promising deals with two customers in that time, the contribution points having started flowing in already.

The first was Aeneas, the current leader of House Priam. He was actually one of the oldest Violet cores on all of Remior, widely considered to have the best chance of reaching White. Should he succeed, he’d elevate his family to the eighth Great House. Adding to that, House Priam was fortunate in other ways. Located in a fertile yet remote region, they were free to develop without many enemies. Suffice to say, Aeneas was rich, and had nothing better to spend his money on.

‘11,000 points per dose is still crazy! That’s nearly thirty times the cost of the normal elixirs!’ Percy was shocked when Nesha told him.

Sadly, their second customer wasn't quite so lucrative. The leader of House Talos was a relatively young Violet core, thousands of years from White. His family was constantly at war against their neighbours, House Antaeus. Naturally, they didn't have too many resources to spare. That said, it also made them desperate to spend what little they did have, to grasp any edge they could get their hands on.

Ultimately, Nesha had chosen them over their rivals because they had a Blue core closer to Violet. That person would probably end up as the recipient of the Aurora Dew. In the end, House Talos had agreed to purchase the new elixir at 8,000 points apiece which – although much less than what House Priam was paying – was still a hefty sum. Percy would have been happy to leave it at that. He personally only needed six doses per day and – after selling just as many to their customers – he could save the rest for the future.

However, Nesha had made him an unexpected offer. The girl had wanted to purchase another set of Aurora Dew, this one for her own use. Specifically, she'd pay 8,000 points per dose, matching what they made from House Talos. According to her, they wouldn't make more if they approached a third customer anyway, and her share of the profits was more than enough to cover the expense.

Naturally, Percy hadn't had any reason to decline.

Though his partner's offer had surprised him. Nesha had never struck him as the type who cared much about her own magic – a pity too, as he thought she was wasting her rare and powerful space affinity. Evidently, she intended to change that. And that was on top of all the other things she had to do. Namely, managing their deals and even keeping the gambling den open, to avoid drawing suspicion.

In a strange turn of events, the lazy girl had turned a lot more hardworking!

'What's her goal anyway?' he couldn't help but wonder.

But he shook his head. That wasn't any of his business. He should respect her privacy as she had respected his. In any case, Percy was currently standing at the ground level of the Fungal Spire. He had plenty of training plans for today, though those were for later. Right now, he was waiting for somebody.

He was about to meet the Oblivious Agent for the first time.