Wanderer 97

Chapter 97: Oblivious Agent

Generally, Percy didn't have to interact with the Agent much. His primary responsibility was to brew the elixirs. As for everything else, it was taken care of by Nesha. However, there was one task Percy couldn't delegate to anyone else.

'I hope this is the right spot.'

Today, he wore a full-body shroud to conceal his face and the colour of his robes. To further disguise himself, Percy stuffed a pillow under his shirt and crouched slightly, making him appear shorter and bulkier than usual. Maybe it was a bit overkill, but he preferred being overly cautious than careless. Of course, the Agent might still discern his grade via Mana Sense. That's why he'd asked Nesha to procure him another enchanted bandage, wrapping it around his chest.

"You didn't need to go to all this trouble. I won't remember anything about you or this meeting five minutes from now." a man spoke.

The newcomer faintly appeared on the horizon, casually walking towards Percy. He seemed to be wearing a dark cowl, though it was hard to tell from the distance. The air shimmered with colourful motes, obscuring his figure further. Percy guessed the man must've used a spell to project his voice from so far away. It had sounded distorted, yet oddly clear – likely due to a sound affinity.

"I'd rather not take any chances." Percy replied, deepening his own voice too.

Nesha's arrangements had admittedly grown quite complex, yet thorough. She was clearly just as paranoid as him – if not more. The Agent had to juggle half a dozen tasks, plus she had him erase any memories the moment they ceased being necessary. She also met him regularly, to update him on any information he required for his next moves. Finally, she took every chance she could to use her bloodline on him, confirming he had no intention of going off script or betraying them.

"Fair enough." the man said once he drew closer.

He placed a heavy-looking pouch on the ground about a dozen metres from Percy, its contents making all sorts of crisp sounds as they tumbled over one another. A cursory glance via Mana Sense revealed the Agent's core was concealed too, which admittedly made Percy feel a little uneasy. For all he knew, the guy could be at Blue – more than capable of casually killing him with nobody ever finding out.

'Calm down Percy… As long as they don't know the recipe, you're more valuable alive anyway…'

"Why do you guys even do this?" he asked out loud, partly to conceal his inner turmoil and partly out of genuine curiosity.

"It's no big deal. We have a unique talent, so we're using it in service of our family." the Agent replied.

"Well, sure… but isn't the cost too high? Aren't you worried you'll look back one day only to realize you can't remember half your life?"

The man shrugged.

"You're overestimating the importance of these memories."

Contemplating the Agent's words, Percy felt they made sense. If anything, the man was probably better off forgetting every time he assassinated a target or spent weeks trekking through a forest. It was more of a blessing than a curse, really. Unaware of Percy's thoughts, the Agent then left, having completed this part of his mission.

Only when he was gone did Percy dare approach the pouch, opening it. It was large enough to fit two watermelons inside, filled to the brim with small vials about the size of his pinkie. Each contained a deep crimson liquid that looked a bit like glowing blood. And there were thousands upon thousands of them in there. Naturally, these were the enlightenment potions – or at least the first batch. Percy had asked to be paid in this manner for the near future.

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'Micky! Come over here!'

The crow was busy hunting Starry Workers on the mushrooms above. Percy hadn't called it over sooner, as he hadn't wanted to risk the Agent spotting it. While waiting for his familiar to arrive, he took off his disguise. Folding everything, he stashed it on a nearby tree, hiding it carefully in the vibrant canopy. Truth be told, the meeting with the Agent had largely assuaged his worry – the man didn't seem like he had any intention of hurting him. Still, there wasn't any harm in dressing up next time too.

"CAW!" Micky greeted him a few minutes later.

The bird hastily grabbed the pouch in its beak before flying away. It was heavy, straining the crow's flight somewhat, though Percy figured it would manage to carry it to its nest.

'Eventually…'

They'd already confirmed the potions worked as intended – so the only thing left was for Micky to consume them. Of course, it would take him hours to drink so many, but that was a small price to pay. Seeing his familiar leave, Percy headed off too. It was still early, and he had other plans for today.

Ascending to the second level of the Spire, he walked about a quarter around it, reaching a region by the west side which he knew was already plenty far from prying eyes. Next, he spent a few minutes searching for the nearest Starry Worker. After finding one, he sat cross-legged on the fungus, some distance away from the bug. Then, he took a deep breath.

Soon, a series of silver lines lit up underneath his skin, drawing a maelstrom around his sternum. Of course, Percy didn't bother activating Circulation with his second core, as he didn't need the pure mana for what he wanted to do. As for Synchronization, it would certainly help, but he couldn't keep it active for long enough yet.

Once the technique began empowering him and replenishing his reserves, he sent out a pulse of mana from his sternum, rippling through his soul. He directed the waves to converge a few inches below his chest, before swiftly grabbing the resulting bump in a familiar manner. That's right! Percy had been ready to create another clone for a while, and he intended to do so right now, on the hunting grounds!

Naturally, there were a bunch of reasons why he'd chosen this open location over the safety of his house, the first of which having to do with the very body he intended to possess.

By the time Percy was done cultivating the bulge and filling it up with soul mana, several hours had passed. Micky had already finished drinking the potions, and he'd returned to the second level too, to help Percy with the next step.

Pinning the wasp down wasn't very difficult for the crow, though it did take some extra care to avoid killing it or injuring it too badly just yet. Grabbing the bug's thorax from behind, he clenched it tightly within his talons.

BZZZZZZZZZ

It struggled desperately of course, trying to escape the crow's clutches. However, it never stood a chance, as Micky didn't have much trouble overpowering it – especially with the amber lines currently decorating his plumage, reinforcing his already superior strength.

A couple minutes later, the bird dragged the Starry Worker to Percy, who was holding a silver orb thrumming with power in one hand, forming an ethereal dagger with the other.

Glancing at the wasp before him, Percy considered how to best approach this. Given the potency of his soul constructs, even the slightest injury he inflicted would likely prove lethal. That much was fine – part of the plan even – as the creature wasn't going to survive either way. However, it did matter how soon the bug died. In the end, he went with a relatively shallow cut at its sternum, right around the centre of its soul.

The wasp let out a terrible, shrill sound. While Percy was ashamed to admit he didn't particularly care about the bug, he still couldn't help but feel a pang of guilt hearing its pained cry.

A moment later, the creature stopped squirming, making him fear it was already dead. However, a cursory glance at its soul soon revealed that – although not in a great condition – it held on for now.

"Please last a couple more hours!" Percy pleaded, before falling on his back.

With his torso and, by extension, the nascent clone in his grasp facing towards the sky, he finally willed his bloodline ability to activate. The ghostly claw awakened in his core once more. It leapt into the glowing orb with glee, twisting and severing it from Percy's soul.

And as Percy clenched his teeth in pain, the silver meteor shot towards the stars above, soon disappearing from his sight.

'Now for the hard part…'