

Seeking Knowledge

The White City spread before Zach and Naha as they made their way among the people walking about. Unlike the many other cities in the world that bore the same name, this city was actually white. It was a city carved out of bones. No one knew how it came to be, but when people first discovered this island they also found the remnants of a being that they simply called the titan. The bones were the size of a mountain even now, after centuries of them being carved and used for building. By now, it was hard to even tell what kind of a shape the titan had in life, and no one had ever seen anything else like it. Though, there were many massive creatures in this world, none were as towering as what the titan had to have been in life.

The city was situated in a large basin that was filled with a large forest of blue-leaved trees. Which made a stark contrast to the city bustling inside what had once been a body of a titan. Zach had heard many ideas and theories about the titan, from those that said that they were fake and had in fact been created by some powerful Ranker that had abandoned the core long ago, to those that believed it to be a remnant for the vessel of a god-like being. Some believed that the entire basin was a ground zero for a great battle that took place a long time before any Ranker ever set foot here.

The bones existence though, meant many different things. If they had in truth belonged to a real being, they gave clues about the nature of the Infinite Realm itself, gave it a history before the arrival of the Iterations. Few cared about that really, but there were a few factions that were obsessed with learning.

As they walked down the streets, Zach saw many figures wearing deep red robes, members of a Dealmaker Cult that had a presence in the city. They were studying the bones, wondering if their presence was a message from the being that they considered the voice of creators.

Some who were more... zealous, stood in squares preaching about sins against the Infinite Realm to the crowds that ignored them.

The adventurers were generally not the people that cared about anything other than killing monsters.

Others wore black robes with an emblem of an open eye on their breast and masks over their faces. The Seekers of Knowledge had a large presence on the Island, unsurprisingly, if one knew what their purpose was. They were, as their name indicated, the seekers of knowledge. They sought to learn everything that they possibly could. Their branch in the White City dedicated itself mostly to the knowledge about monsters and monster types, as well as learning about new powers and their requirements. Being near adventurers was a perfect way for them to achieve that.

Zach saw a few wardens walking down the street, nodding in his direction when he and Naha passed. It was still strange to him, to see people that he didn't recognize know him. He returned their nods, and continued walking. Their jobs were the same as they were everywhere else, keep the peace and hunt down criminals. A job that was not made any easier by recent events. The wars had made the relationships on the island itself tense. The few factions that had representatives on the island were constantly making trouble, though no one had really escalated. But the few wardens on the island were attempting to keep the peace. Though that was made difficult by the cultists and their constant provocations.

The White City was the main and the only true city on the Island of Dungeons. Which was impressive, because while everyone called this place an island, it was the size of a small continent. There were many smaller outposts, some towns, but only one great city. The hub for all the different factions that were trying to gain riches and power from the dungeons that lined nearly every part of the island. Most of the people here were adventurers, previously united by the Adventurers Guild, but were now fractured into a hundred smaller factions.

Then there were the cultists, of course, trying to discern some secret about the world from the clues they believed were left here. But there were other factions too. The Wardens, of course, had a presence.

Until recently it had been a major one, but now there were only a few of them here, if one counted Zach and Naha. There had been battles between different factions even, small skirmishes. Despite the tensions, the island had managed to avoid a war, though everyone could see that if things don't change soon a war was inevitable.

It was why Zach and Naha needed to finish his quest here as quickly as possible. They didn't want to get involved in a war; they had already seen plenty of it on the mainland. The years after the tournament had been... rough. The Wardens had floundered for a while, the loss of the Warden Commander had hit the organization hard. Bera had held them together until the other high-ranking Wardens returned to the citadel from their assignments. Then they had held a vote to elect a new leader. Zach had no horse in the race, so he and Naha had spent their time on assignments in the core. They've hunted criminals that had tried to take advantage of the growing chaos.

In a way, having something to do had helped them. It made them forget the things that they had seen and knew lurked in the core, ignored by everyone. Zach knew that the horde of monsters had to be taken care off, but... he was just one warden. His personal influence had grown with the tournament, people had seen him fight and the word had spread that he was the one that closed the portal. But he was not yet immortal, no matter what they called him and how they respected him. The word of Wardens Tempest was not enough to do anything.

Zach and Naha had realized quickly that they wouldn't be able to change anything. And so they focused on what they could do, and that was to grow stronger and finish his quest. They had done nearly everything. He had found powerful and unique planes and stayed in them, experiencing new things, pushing his mind and body. They hunted criminals, and in between missions hunted for places and monsters that he needed to finish the quest. They've explored the Ethereal Realm and killed spirits and shades.

Naha had advanced her skills, while he... He had improved a few, but he hadn't focused on them that much. No, he had trained with his

powers, mastering them and their use. Learning how to manage all his resources to the utmost of his ability. He had improved, there was no doubt about that even if his screens had barely changed.

As they walked through the city, he saw people glancing at Naha. The reactions to her appearance were always varied. Most, at first glance, assumed that she was a half breed. She looked like a cross between a human and a demasi, at least at first glance. Her skin was pinkish, the same as her Quell form, with a face that had more human features. Two sets of horns were on top of her head, slender and long curving backward to frame her black hair.

He had seen many people sneer at her, or look at her with expressions of disgust. Then they noticed the rest. Her hands were covered in black scales, the arms of a drake and a long drake tail trailed behind her. Then they saw her cat-like razor eyes. They saw how her body was muscled, more than an average human was. They realized that she wasn't what they believed her to be, but the silent judging still remained. Even if she wasn't a half breed, most assumed that she was a Cultivator, that her appearance was the result of a True Body. It was ironic, that the more secluded and judgmental people—those from the sects—were far more accepting of such great physical changes.

It didn't matter to him, nor did it matter to Naha, which was more important.

It was... frustrating in many ways. Her new body was great, but it was also a constant reminder of how far she had come. To see Naha advance and change while he still remained the same was hard. He loved her, so he tried so hard not to let those feelings fester. He talked with her about everything, his insecurities included. It was something that he worked hard on achieving, being completely honest. And she was the same with him. He couldn't imagine what his life would be like without her.

Zach glanced at his screens as they walked and pulled out a few windows. He had access to three Classes, three Immortal advancements that he had unlocked through his feats. One was an advancement that he had gained through his faction, the **Warden**

Master Class. It was a mythic class, so not an improvement. Also, it was a strength and dexterity combat class with an attunement that would help him fulfill his duties as a warden by allowing him to see through lies, to sense the truth. It was a powerful attunement, but... It was not what he wanted to do or be. The other two though... were tempting.

The **Dark Portal Master** was a Class which he had access to since the moment he closed the rift in the Tournament City. And it was Relic Class. He had nearly taken it back then; when he had seen the horde and had fought in the core. It would've helped him, of that he had no doubt, but in the end, he didn't take it. In part because it would focus on things that he didn't want to. But mostly because of the attunement. It was... powerful, but also terrible. It gave him great power over portals and rifts, but at a price. His portals would drain people that pass through, leaching power out of them. He had no doubt that it was powerful, but he knew that he had gained the Class because of his feat when closing the portal and because he had drained power from other beings before.

His Soul Weapon was more than enough for him, he didn't need another thing that could do something like that. But there were other considerations as well. With that Class he wouldn't be able to take Naha with him through them without weakening her, and that was unacceptable.

The last Class, he had gained only recently, when they had killed the fifth dragon for his quest.

The **Dragon Hunter** Class. Despite being another mythic class, it was more tempting in a way. Mostly because it was something that he could see himself utilizing. A simple fighter Class that focused on killing dragons and empowering the Classer.

But despite all those choices, he knew deep down that he wasn't going to pick any of them. He knew a lot less about the **Lord of the Aspects** Class, but... It was difficult to explain, other than to say that he felt like it was going to be a better fit.

“We are here,” Naha’s voice interrupted him, and he dismissed his windows then looked up.

They were in front of a large building carved out of a rib bone, it curved and towered above them. The stone had been added to the base in order to expand the building, but he could see the windows on the side of the bone walls.

Zach took a deep breath and then took a step forward. The two of them walked into the building occupied by the Seekers of Knowledge.

There were a lot of people walking around, some of them seekers, but most adventurers. It wasn’t surprising, the Seekers bought and sold knowledge about the dungeons. A good adventuring team was always prepared for their dungeon dive. They waited in the line to speak with the attendant at the large counter.

It didn’t take long for their turn to come.

“Greetings,” a masked individual spoke as they stopped in front of their table. “How may the Seekers of Knowledge help you today.”

“We wish to speak with an adviser,” Zach said. “We are interested in information about dungeons.”

“Ah,” the seeker said. “What categories?”

“General dungeon locations with knowledge about inhabiting monster types, estimated dungeon power levels, preferably as up to date knowledge as possible,” Zach answered.

The seeker nodded and looked at something behind the counter. “Hm... you are in luck; we have a qualified person available. The price will be 100 Celestial Essence.”

Zach grimaced, but placed his hand over the small remote interface and paid the price. The price varied depending on the seeker one spoke to. Some were more knowledgeable than others. Still, it wasn’t too high of a price to pay, not for Zach at least. Spending three years in constant conflict without spending any Essence on advancement had given him a lot of it to spend.

The seeker placed a small tablet on the table with a number on it. “Here you go, may your quest for knowledge bear fruit.”

“Thank you,” Zach said and then turned, following the signs that directed him to the room with the same number as the one on the tablet he had been given.

They found the room easily and entered. It was a room with only a simple desk in the middle of it, and it was empty when they arrived, so the two of them took their seats at the table.

“You think that we will be able to find another?” Naha asked.

Zach grimaced. “I don’t know, I hope so.”

They were here to try and learn a simple piece of information. A location of another dungeon that had a dragon type monster inside of it. His quest was made all the more difficult by the fact that dragons were rare. Elemental dragons indubitably more so. And he needed to defeat dragons of an element that he hadn’t already encountered. The issue was that they had already fought against the most common dragon types. Five dragons, a fire, water, earth, air, were the most common, and they had gotten lucky and had found a dungeon that held a sand dragon. And it had taken them months to find dragon type monsters and that weren’t of any elemental Aspect that they had already fought.

The door opened, and another black robed and masked individual entered.

“Greetings knowledge seekers,” the seeker said.

Both Zach and Naha inclined their heads in greeting.

“How can I help you today?” The seeker asked as they took their seats.

“We are searching for a dungeon, or rather a certain type of monster,” Zach corrected himself. The Island of Dungeons was best known for its many dungeons, but it also had monsters outside of them. It was home to both respawning and wild dungeons, but there were also territories filled with wandering monsters.

“What kind?” The seeker asked.

“An elemental dragon,” Zach said.

“Hm... That is a rare sight indeed, but not uncommon, there are several well-known dungeons that have them. I assume that you have some additional caveats?”

“Yes,” Zach nodded. “It cannot be a dragon of the fire, water, earth, air, or sand element. And it needs to be no less than three tiers of power beneath me and my tier of power is eight.”

His tier was public knowledge for the most part, since he competed in the tournament. Though that part of the requirement wasn't really an issue here. Dragons were generally never below tier 9.

“I assume that this is a quest requirement, yes?” The seeker said.

“Something like that,” Zach said.

“Well, that disqualifies most of the dungeons on the island. The great majority of them are of the four main elements. Hm... the tier of power is an issue. I know of no dragon type monsters in any dungeon that is suited for your tier of power.”

“I can fight on the level of tiers that are higher than mine,” Zach said. “If you know of any dungeons just tell us.”

The seeker took a long look at Zach then spoke. “Sadly, even with taking that into account I know of no dungeon that would fit that criteria.”

“What about monsters outside of a dungeon?” Zach asked.

The seeker remained silent for a long while. Zach and Naha waited patiently, knowing that this was their best chance to find another dragon. Searching on their own had little chance of success. Dragons were solitary creatures, and pretty rare in the Infinite Realm overall.

Finally, the seeker spoke again. “There are a few territories where there had been dragon sightings, with all the... complications between the factions on the island, there hadn't been any organized effort to look into it. There were a few reports that spoke about things that could indicate an elemental dragon, though nothing is confirmed. I do not know if it even is a dragon, there are many reports of people going missing and caravans vanishing. There is only one report that speaks about a winged and flying monster.”

“Can you tell us where these reports come from? We’d like to look into it,” Zach said.

“The issue is that there isn’t a verified estimated power on the monster. The unofficial one is saying tier 14, since that was the estimated fighting power of one of the squads that disappeared.”

Zach grimaced. That was six tiers of power above him. He glanced at Naha and she met his eyes. She herself was on the 13th tier of power, which would help them a lot. He knew that he could punch above his weight, but they also needed to be careful. This was only an estimation, not a verified number. They could be walking into something that they couldn’t handle.

He tried to see what Naha thought, but he saw nothing but trust and support in her gaze. He knew what the two of them were capable of. In the end they were both capable of escaping quickly. Zach turned to the seeker and spoke.

“Tell us where.”