

CHAPTER 114: DRIVING UP THE WALL

Raiko looked at him. “You have a name, I believe, already picked?”

“Sil’mara,” Sam said. “It’s the name of my Skyshard.” He looked at her. “You suggested it, remember?”

“I like it,” Raiko said suddenly, grinning.

For a wonder, he smiled back at her. “As do I.”

Clearly, she had expected him to put forth a different name, but he liked Sil’mara. When their territory has had a chance to grow, he might like to name something after O’ahu, where he grew up.

The Kingdom of Sil’mara has been founded.

“Ay girl, you want a royal consort to warm your bed?” Matt asked Raiko, pumping his eyebrows ridiculously.

“Don’t mess around like that,” Sam said, unable to keep the fierce aggression out of his tone. He didn’t know where it came from. It just boiled out.

“Besides,” Kai added, “we all sleep in the same room effectively. There are no doors, and the walls, while quite nice...” he nodded at Raiko, “are, in effect, very thin. Acoustically.”

“Yeah, yeah, Sculpting is costly.” Raiko crossed her arms.

“Who says I was joking?” Matt eyed Sam, who stood and loomed threateningly over his previous boss, completely casting him in shadow. “Fine, fine. That’s just one way to power, is all!”

“It’s not happening, Matt.” Raiko shook her head. “Not under that pretense. I’ve had more than enough men pursue me for terrible reasons. No need to add you to the list.”

“But you’re beau—”

“Shush, before Sam picks you up and throws you off the island,” Raiko interrupted him. “We’re still dueling later. And if you even think for a second, you’re going to outlive me to take my throne, you’re wrong. I’m not even sure I can age past this.”

“Is Sam like that too?”

“Probably.”

“Unga-bunga,” Komachi whispered.

“That only makes it more appealing,” Matt confessed, then he remembered where the conversation had previously been headed and held up his hands defensively. “I *meant* having two leaders who are functionally immortal. It... oddly feels comforting to know that I won’t be alone.”

“My children will be in good hands,” Kai agreed. “It is... as you say, surprisingly comforting. Knowing that there are people who will remain and see everything is steered correctly. Though it is quite odd to imagine my descendants and their descendants living under the very same friends I made so long ago.”

Raiko nodded, staring into the cookfire forlornly. She was likely thinking of family and friends lost to the apocalypse that would not be around for that journey.

“People do age slower as they get stronger,” Lenal told him. “The faster you gain power, the greater the slowdown is. With how strong each of you already is, I would wager you would be living for a few centuries, at least. Unless something kills you.”

“Of course,” Matt said. “That goes without saying.”

“How much slower?” Kai asked.

Lenal folded her hands primly. “We were doing some tests on that back at the Academy. We did not get very far due to the fact that our... research subjects were also students and faculty.”

“Not very well-known for their skill with a sword, I’ll bet.” Matt snickered. “I would volunteer, but I’m already immortal.”

Lenal looked at Kai. “Since we seem to be the only two non-immortals here, perhaps it would be in our best interest if you allowed me to... study you?”

Kai looked darkly at her. “How do you mean?”

“I could chart your progress. There are many chemicals that can tell a person’s actual age. Not the years they have lived, but how old their body is. I do not have access to any of them, and we would need an Alchemist besides, but there are no less than 3 Alchemists at the Academy.”

“And that would be how you would test?”

“It seems the easiest way, does it not? What little we could find from testing one another is that the lower our level was, the more the years equaled our body’s age. As we gained levels, that age lowered. Professors who were into their 60s suddenly became 30-year-olds with only ten levels under their belts.”

“There are humans and elves there?” Raiko asked.

“Quite a few, yes. We are quite lucky, considering. Dwarves as well, naturally.”

“Oh good, I miss dwarves and their banter.”

“Why lucky?” Matt asked.

“Humans are very rare,” Lenal explained, as if she were lecturing. “They do not adapt well to high winds, high moisture, underwater, underground, high pressure, high temperature. The list goes on.

They are, on balance, quite fragile and are to be admired for surviving past their infancy, I think. And to top it all off, their lives are but a blink. It is really quite sad.”

“Kai is human,” Matt pointed out.

Lenal blinked. “I... am so sorry,” she said it as if Matt had just told her Kai had cancer.

And, perhaps to her, it was.

“You did not know?” Kai asked.

“I do not like to presume race. Some look very strikingly similar to humans, but are not humans. It never does to presume. That is even more of a reason to study you! Your life is so short that even a *tiny* increase in power should pay huge dividends in the form of a longer lifespan.”

“Sure,” Kai said, “why not?”

“Is Komachi immortal?” She sounded suddenly extremely worried. Considering she was staring at Sam, she was probably terrified of leaving him behind on his own. And contemplating her own mortality and impending death.

And then, of all people, she looked to Raiko for answers.

Sam reached out and scooped her up into his arms like a tiny golden furred baby. Her wide green eyes stayed locked on Raiko.

A lot hinged on her reply. Raiko appeared quite put on the spot, and all too aware how important her answer was. Not just to Komachi, but to Sam as well.

Was she about to run? It was hard to tell.

The look Sam gave Raiko was one that said, in no uncertain terms, “If you do not assure this precious child instantly, I will not be responsible for my actions.”

For the briefest of moments, Raiko appeared ready to challenge him, but she visibly crushed that reaction. “Yes, you’re immortal Komachi,” she explained soothingly. “Once you’ve fully become a soul aeder. What does your [Status] say?”

That nearly made Sam freak out, but it had the opposite effect on Komachi. She didn’t understand that, technically, she wasn’t immortal yet.

Terror wiped every other thing Sam was thinking out of his mind. His heart rate jacked up, faster than most battles could do.

Sam couldn’t handle Komachi passing away.

He couldn’t comprehend the possibility. Life without Komachi? He would do *anything* to stop that.

Even give up his own immortality, if it came down to it.

“Cat,” Komachi answered. “With a question mark.”

Raiko paused. “How about some more of those tasty treats, huh?”

Komachi eagerly ate from her hand, considerably calmed down.

“Treats?” Lenal asked.

“When I found her, she had a severe mana deficiency. And that Earth is— *was*—effectively a land without magic, so it was little wonder.”

Lenal appeared horrified.

“Soul aeder being magical creatures, you can see how that’s problematic,” Raiko continued gently. “Hence, the smuggled treats crafted for soul aeder. They’re from Pobul Paradise, so I assure you, they’ll work.”

“Pobul Paradise?” Sam asked slowly, getting his breathing under control.

“A sanctuary for soul aeder.”

“Protected by the Kindred,” Lenal said, in awe. “Are the myths true, that it is one of Dream’s created realms?”

“I suppose?” Raiko shrugged. “She wasn’t there, though Ardor was. Or an Incarnate of hers, not sure. She definitely looked and acted familiar.”

Considering Raiko’s gloomy expression, Lenal refrained from asking more questions, despite how badly she obviously wanted to.

Later in the day, once Sam had organized the dullahan into an assembly line of chopping fiends, he conscripted the rest of the group to help him build the palisade wall around the encampment.

With Komachi and Chompers able to store several 100-foot-long trees at once, they ferried the raw lumber from the edge of the [Forest Tile] over to the edge of the encampment where Sam had found a new use for [Heavy Blade].

If he charged it and swung it down vertically, he could cleave deeply through the dirt and stone. That, however, wasn’t very useful. At least not for trying to plant trees upright.

What *was* useful, however, was the alteration he had made with a mixture of Metal affinity and Void mana. By laboriously coating the striking edge of the blade with Void mana, he could direct the explosive energy of his [Heavy Blade] away from the ground.

The impact itself—not to be confused with Impact mana—combined with the slight recoil as the Metal mana rebounded off the Void shell, was enough to create a trench several feet wide.

And by utilizing his Metal affinity, he could direct the rest of the pent-up energy out towards the tip of the blade, extending the trench dozens of feet forward.

It was a very complicated process that needed to be constantly monitored as he was still fairly new to his Void affinity and the way he could shape Void mana better than ever before came with its own sets of problems.

A dullahan nearby used its own massive greatsword—though it looked like a normal broadsword in its colossal hands—to chop up the logs into 50-foot segments. Then they sharpened the ends of some of the logs to act as the spiked portion of the wall.

Some of the trees Sam had ordered the dullahan to keep at their original towering length. They needed two dullahan apiece to handle them and put them into place behind the much smaller sharpened logs.

All in all, Sam had to admit, it was going pretty well.

The idea was simple in retrospect.

Sam aimed to create a 50-foot wall of sharpened logs, and then, about 10 feet behind that, they planted the top 100-foot of said trees into the ground.

Their branches and upper canopies—only slightly damaged from stuffing them into the improbable Inventory of the mimic—would cover the palisades from nearly all angles but right in front of them. And the 10-foot gap would allow them to build a walkway that could be patrolled and still hidden beneath the green canopy while spotting anybody approaching.

In many cases, as Sam took a break to wander around the construction of the wall, he noticed that some of the branches in the back shaded the spikes in such a way that they were impossible to see unless you knew where to look.

By the time you got that close, anybody on the wall would see you. Granted, that required having enough people to man said wall, which they didn't.

Better to prepare for that now and not have to rebuild the wall, Sam thought.

Any low-lying branches were trimmed with a simple chop from the dullahan's hand, breaking the branch off and stopping anybody from easily climbing over.

Of course, that would be an issue, regardless. Walls practically invited climbing to certain frames of mind. The point was to add protection from monsters while remaining incognito.

As Matt had pointed out, there had to be hundreds of Skyshards out there and millions, if not billions, of people stranded. Some of them would not come in peace if they saw a burgeoning civilization.

Besides, it would be a lot easier to deal with interlopers if they didn't know that Sam's kingdom was there.

It still felt weird to call it his kingdom. It was a wonder that they managed to settle on a name so quickly.

Sam returned to work, digging trenches with his magical sword. It was dirty, tiring work, but definitely not menial.

The degree of control required to keep from creating a crater of destruction, or losing all that power into the sky was much higher than he would have ever expected.

Not too long ago, he wouldn't have been able to do it.

He practically required Void affinity *and* Metal affinity to pull it off, and even then, he was constantly having to monitor and tweak the shell of Void mana to prevent a catastrophic blowback.

It took all day, and several extra trips back to the [Forest Tile] to cut down more trees, but with Raiko's [Glyph: Refresh] applied judiciously, they managed to complete half the wall on that first day.

Sam couldn't help but muse that on Earth, such a feat would have taken—not accounting for red tape—weeks or months on end just to get a small section up and secured.

Magic is the best.