

Interlude – Lesamitrius I

Lesamitrius Danos, followed behind his leaders as the host led them deeper into the tower. They made a short stop at one of the rooms at the base floor beforehand, as the Sect Head wanted to sell some items, the Sect Leaders went as well, adding some of the more expensive materials that the Twilight Melody Sect possessed, like the hearthstone ore and some materials harvested from powerful monsters. Lesamitrius wasn't sure if that would be enough to get them access to a better auction, but he hoped. After that they were escorted up to the first floor, letting him know that it hadn't been enough. The room was empty and barely large enough to fit them inside, and Sect Leader Kesh ordered Likos and the two Lords to stand guard at the doors. Of course, they had been given the smallest of rooms on the first floor. Although even that surprised him, he hadn't thought that their sect would get even that. He had been expecting for them to be led to the hall on the ground floor where everyone who didn't qualify for their own room was led. Each sect had a rating on the global faction ranking operated by the Framework. It wasn't fully precise, the Framework took into account things like the amount of territories and their development, and not much else. Still it surprised him that his new sect had enough qualifications for a private room. Perhaps the items that the Sect Head put on auction warranted this.

The room was clean, but sparsely furnished. The word berth was deceptive however, it was larger than that, though not by much. The host led them inside and showed the Sect Head to the end of the room, where a large window allowed them to look into the hollow center of the tower. The auction would be held in the middle, with people participating standing on the base floor or sitting above. Lesamitrius glanced out of the window, seeing eight floors above theirs for a total of nine. The more powerful the faction, the higher their floor. There were many windows in the inner ring, the tower was incredibly large, enough to fit thousands or more even.

Lesamitrius stood to the side, watching as their host instructed them how to use the interface that sat on the table in front of the window to place bids and pay. It was all so interesting to Lesamitrius, but he had to admit that

most of his attention was on his Sect Head. He couldn't help it, the moment he came out, dressed in a carefully crafted robe, cleanly shaved and his hair trimmed, that was the moment when Lesamitrius truly felt like he was in the presence of a great Sect Head.

He had felt that way before, of course, his Sect Head was an Immortal Realm Cultivator. Not even Lesamitrius' father had achieved that. It was an honor just to have the Sect Head spare his time to spar with him. To face an Immortal Realm Cultivator was not only a great honor, it was also an opportunity unlike any other for those who were yet to reach that Realm. The inspiration needed to reach the Immortal Realm was particularly difficult, and just observing Immortals is said to increase a person's chances of achieving their Realm.

Lesamitrius could admit that he hadn't really been... on board with his father's decision to send him to the Twilight Melody Sect. He had felt like they were nothing but a small and worthless sect. And he had allowed his frustrations to get the better of him. He had nearly broken his word. The look of disappointment in his father's eyes was what had finally made him snap out of it. Even then, it had taken him a while to see the value in his new sect. His Sect Leaders were unimpressive, neither Sect Leader Kesh or Ornn were all that powerful. Even now, he believed that he was close or perhaps even stronger than them. But those things didn't matter.

He had seen how the Twilight Melody Sect operated, and had been surprised by it. It was not how he had experienced life in a sect before. And he had tried to reach as high of a position as he could, the only way he knew how. When the Sect Head returned... everything changed. He finally saw worth, and a great opportunity. In his mind, Sect Head Nacht was everything that Lesamitrius had ever imagined a Sect Head to be when he was still a child. Someone who was composed, calculating, who didn't let his emotions out for the world to see.

True, he hadn't looked like a Sect Head before, his hair had been ragged and dirty, his beard unkempt, his clothes barely worthy of being called such. But he had power, and in the end that was all that mattered. Even then, when he had gotten beaten to a pulp by the Sect Head, Lesamitrius had known that

serving such a Sect Head was not only an honor but would allow him to reach greater heights.

After he had seen how the Sect Head looked when he was dressed and cleaned up, all his fears were put to rest. Seeing him interact with other people, the way that he held his ground proudly when speaking with the host, letting his second speak. It all made him look so... damn cool. And Lesamitrius had been invited in his inner circle. He was a part of the leadership of a sect! It was all he had ever wanted.

“If you need anything Sect Head,” the host spoke as he stepped back. “You only need to ring this bell.”

Lesamitrius glanced at the bell placed on a tall stand next to one of two chairs near the window. It obviously had formations on it, probably for silence. It wouldn't do well for its ringing to disturb the other patrons. It would probably be linked with another bell somewhere else, ringing one would make the other ring as well.

The host bowed his head to them, and his Sect Head just stood in front of him, calmly staring him down. Of course the host wasn't going to stay, the Twilight Melody Sect wasn't important enough to have a personal host, the man was probably in charge of several groups. Sect Head Ryun Nacht didn't incline his head as was proper, obviously making his displeasure known in regards to the situation and the auction house's low evaluation of them. It was a risky thing to do, but the man wasn't part of the sects, it was allowed.

The host looked around awkwardly before shuffling out of the room, obviously embarrassed, as he should be! The Sect Head deserved more than what the auction house offered. Lesamitrius glanced back to his Sect Head expectantly.

“We should get ready,” Sect Leader Kesh said and gestured toward the chairs. There were two of them, and as was proper Sect Head took his seat first, followed by Sect Leader Kesh. As his second in command she enjoyed a greater than usual confidence and freedom, something that Lesamitrius wasn't yet used to, but he was making an effort. At first he had assumed that the Sect Leader Kesh and the Sect Head were involved romantically, which would make Sect Leader Ornn the mistress, only it quickly became apparent that she and Sect Leader Kesh were the ones in a relationship. It had

confused Lesamitrius greatly, but in the end he had to accept that his Sect Head and Sect Leader were just simply close, even if it didn't seem all that proper.

Sect Leader Ornn took her place behind Sect Leader Kesh's chair, leaving Lesamitrius to take the spot behind his Sect Head, an honored position that he took gladly. He stood in silence, looking down the window at the raised circular platform in the middle of the room below them. People were walking up onto the platform, a Demasi woman, dressed in a long flowing golden dress that contrasted her ruby skin. Behind her came two workers, both dressed immaculately, and carrying a small chest between them. They placed the chest in the middle of the platform on a round stone table that was placed there.

"Greetings valued patrons," the woman spoke, and her voice was projected directly into the room. Lesamitrius looked around trying to find the formation that facilitated that, but he was unable to locate it.

"My name is Avina," the woman continued. "And I will be your host today. Without further ado, let us start."

She turned around and walked to the table, then opened the chest with a flourish, revealing the item inside. It was a small knife, jade in color with markings all over the blade.

"The first item we have on sale is a legendary skinning knife, Hunter's Best Friend, sold by the Adventurers Guild, and as you can see," she put her hand on the knife then gestured with her other. A window appeared in the air above her, large enough so that everyone could read it. The woman probably had a vendor or some variation on the class to be able to do that. Lesamitrius started to read as she spoke.

Hunter's Best Friend	+50 to Dexterity Skinning with this knife increases the leveling speed of all skinning related skills by 20%.
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"An incredible item, made out of beautiful green metal," the woman said showing the knife above her head as she moved around the platform.

“As you all must be aware, while skinning skills are mostly used by hunters and butchers, some... combat skills can take advantage of the effect as well.”

Lesamitrius shivered. It was true, there were probably combat skills that could make use of skinning, attacks intended to rend skin apart. But what the woman was clearly insinuating were torturing skills.

“We’ll start the bidding at one thousand Celestial Essence!” The woman announced.

The bidding started, and Lesamitrius was surprised to see that the new bids kept coming in. The current highest bid was displayed in the air above the table, a number along with the faction that made the bid. He did notice that some factions didn’t have their names listed, and were instead anonymous. He was glad to see that none of his leaders made a move to bid.

“And sold, to anonymous for one thousand and five hundred Celestial Essence!”

The woman applauded briefly after returning the knife to the chest and closing it. The two workers came back and carried the chest away, while another two brought out another one.

“Next item!” The woman said as she opened the second chest. “Here we have a simple set of six Bracelets, one for each stat. Sold by the Medorin’s Crafter Guild. As you can see the effects are simple, but one can never go wrong with simple effects!”

Six windows appeared above them all, showing the items. The effects were, as she said simple. Each gave 50 to a stat, and had an effect. Strength gave 10% increase to physical damage, dexterity lowered cooldowns by 10%, endurance gave 10% physical damage reduction, vitality increased regeneration by 10%, intelligence increased mental regeneration 10% and wisdom Qi regeneration by the same amount. Simple, and not powerful at all.

The entire set was being sold together, with the starting price of 5000 Celestial Essence. It was expensive, and Lesamitrius didn’t know who would even want it. Despite that the bidding began immediately, and eventually the set was sold for 7000 CE.

A few more items were presented, none of them of any real interest to him, nor his leaders. It was to be expected, Twilight Melody might be a small

sect, but Lesamitrius had seen that their vault possessed some very high quality stuff. And both of their Sect Leaders had Awakened Weapons, that was almost unheard of on the Frontier.

Then, the woman opened another box, this one filled with Essence Crystals.

“And here we have Essence Crystals filled with Void Essence, sold by the Twilight Melody Sect. Most of the crystals have all been cycled once, with some being cycled twice, and are a mix of high tiered Essence. The precise amounts are shown here,” the woman waved her hand and a window showed up.

Lesamitrius blinked, then glanced down at his Sect Head who was leaned back in his chair, with a relaxed expression on his face. Lesamitrius hadn't been aware that their sect had access to such Essence, but he shouldn't have doubted. Their Sect Head was obviously powerful, he couldn't have gotten that way without a source of his aspect. Lesamitrius allowed himself a small smile as the bids started coming in. Void Essence was extremely valuable to crafters, and highly sought after because of that. It was used in crafting of spatial storages, which made it hard to come by. It was one of the reasons why few people used it as their aspect.

“And here comes an incredible bid, 250,000 Celestial Essence, offered by the Regal Crafter Guild,” the woman announced.

Lesamitrius blinked at the amount, but he wasn't really surprised. Ten times the value of the Essence was the least that such sought after crystals went for. Another guild raised the bid, but then the Regal Crafter Guild raised theirs again.

“And the Essence Crystals are sold to the Regal Crafter Guild for 300,000 Celestial Essence!” The woman announced.

“Wow,” Lesamitrius heard Sect Leader Kesh say. “I can't believe it sold for that much.”

“Do you know what we can do with that much Essence?” Sect Leader Ornn asked. “We can outfit all of our warriors with new gear, build towers to guard our territories, increase our hunting parties.”

“Yes,” Sect Leader Kesh said. “But this is Ryun's Essence.”

The Sect Head just shrugged. “You can have it, I planned on filling the Sect vault once we returned anyway.”

Lesamitrius nearly chuckled. *So cool.*

The next few items went by quickly. With a few more of the Twilight Melody items being sold, none for the same amount as the Void Crystals, but enough to increase their coffers a bit.

Then, another box filled with Void Essence came on. And the woman made the screen visible showing the amount. It was ten thousand Celestial Essence tier 8 Void Crystals, only cycled once. An incredible amount that was more than what the Sect Head put on sale.

“We’ll start the bids at 200,000 Celestial Essence.”

It was twenty times the amount offered. The bids started coming in quickly, mostly from the two crafter guilds that were present.

Then, Sect Head Nacht reached out to the interface, touching it for the first time.

“And here we have a new bid, by the Twilight Melody Sect! 340,000 Celestial Essence!”

It was twenty thousand more than what the previous bidder offered.

“Ryun?” Sect Leader Kesh asked. “Are you sure that you want to bid? It is expensive.”

Sect Head turned his head to look at her and smiled. “Don’t worry, this is nothing.”

Sect Leader Kesh blinked, but the Sect Head turned his attention back to the auction. The Regal Crafter Guild raised the bid to 400,000 making the other competitor drop out.

Then, the Sect Head bid again, increasing the bid to 450,000.

“And it looks like the Twilight Melody Sect really wants that Essence. Seeing how they sold one batch already, we can all assume why they need it. Will the Regal Crafter Guild respond?” the woman asked.

And the Guild did.

“And here it comes, 500,000 Celestial Essence from the Regal Crafter Guild!”

Sect Head tilted his head and raised the bid by another twenty thousand.

“Ryun?” Sect Leader Kesh whispered, but the Sect Head wasn’t paying attention. His eyes were locked onto the box.

“The Regal Crafter Guild raises the bid again,” the woman said as the number rose by another ten thousand.

Then a voice yelled out from a floor somewhere above them. “Don’t you dare increase the bid again! Know your place!”

Lesamitrius blinked, such threats were clearly against the rules, and the woman addressed it immediately.

“I remind the patrons that threats are not allowed within this tower, this is your first and final warning.”

Then the number increased again as the Sect Head Nacht placed his hand on the interface.

“And it seems like the Twilight Melody Sect is not impressed by threats! 600,000!”

Lesamitrius waited for the number to increase, but it didn’t. It made sense, people on this auctions were probably underlings that had budgets. Finally after a few more seconds, the woman spoke again.

“The winner is the Twilight Melody Sect,” she announced as the two workers climbed up and took the box away. “Congratulations!”

“Ryun, that is a lot of Essence,” Sect Leader Kesh said. “Are you sure that it is worth antagonizing another faction over?”

“I need it,” Sect Head said simply.

They watched in silence as the auction continued. But there wasn’t anything really interesting to see. It was to be expected. This auction was one open to everyone, the most basic of auctions available in the tower. The other factions present were probably all represented by their lower members. In order to get into the better auctions one needed to show that they could afford to enter.

Sect Head’s small bid war might be enough to get them into the next level.

The auction drew to a close, each of these auctions lasted only an hour, and it seemed that it held only the more mundane items. As the auction drew to a close they gathered up and left the room. Lesamitrius saw their previous

host hurrying in their direction with two workers behind him carrying a box that they had purchased.

Before they could reach them however, another group of people stepped forward. They were clearly not sect, just by manner of their dress alone. They wore elaborate shirts and pants, and had jewelery hanging on thin strips attached to the hems of their outfits.

The one in the lead glared at the Sect Head, and Lesamitrius tensed as he stepped to the side, ready to interfere. The two people behind the leader were tall and ugly looking, both were green skinned humans, and clearly classers which meant that he couldn't quite tell how powerful they were.

"You!" the leader snarled. "You are the Twilight Melody Sect, how dare you interfere in our business! Don't you know who we are?"

For one tense moment, everyone around them quieted as they waited to see what would happen. Sect Head Nacht tilted his head and then answered.

"No."

Before anyone could recover from his answer he stepped around the three people who had clearly expected something different and he approached the host.

Lesamitrius blinked, and then shook his head. "So cool," he whispered.

Sect Leader Ornn turned in his direction, and he realized that she had heard him. He hurried after his Sect Head, his tail swishing in embarrassment despite him trying to keep it calm. That left the Regal Crafter Guild thugs standing there completely flabbergasted.