
Chapter 5: Let The Journey Begin

A *clang* drowned out the silence as my mother dropped her fork onto her plate.

"What? Reynolds! Arthur isn't even four yet! No! Besides, you said if our son was an augments, you'd be able to teach him!" Mother spoke with evident desperation.

"I, also, never expected our son to be this much of a prodigy in mana manipulation. Who has ever heard of an awakening at the age of three?" Father responded a lot more calmly.

"But that means he'll have to leave home! He's only four, Reynolds! We can't have our baby leave home at such an early age!"

"You don't get it. When I observed his body while he meditated, I couldn't help but feel that all of this was natural to him. Alice honey, I'm holding my son back by trying to teach him something he can do in his sleep."

Thus began my parents' quarrel.

They went back and forth, basically repeating their initial points; mother kept saying that I was too young, father saying that they couldn't hold me back from reaching my full potential, blah blah.

In the meantime, I was playing a game of war with my food, the peas attacked for the Mother Empire, while the carrots of the Father Nation desperately defended their land.

Finally, my parents settled down and my father turned to me.

"Art, this is concerning you, so you have a say in this as well. How would you feel about going to a big city and having a teacher?"

Fantastic...

I applauded the effort for trying to make this fair, but I don't think he realized that he was trying to ask a four-year-old to make a decision that would ultimately change his life...

Trying to conclude this little argument, I suggested, "Can I at least try meeting some mentors and have them see if I need to be tutored or not?"

Silence

Did I step on a landmine? Was I not supposed to be this articulate in my sentences at my current age? Are they mad because I didn't choose a side?

Having no confidence in keeping a poker face, I looked down and waited for their response.

Thankfully, none of my fears were on their minds. My mother finally spoke, quietly she muttered, "We'll at least formally have his mana core and channels tested. We can figure out what to do from there."

As my father nodded in agreement, we began making preparations the next day. When I said what I did last night, I assumed that we'd be going to a nearby town or a city, maximum a day's worth of travel away, to have me tested by a qualified mage but boy was I wrong.

We were making preparations for a three-week-long journey. A journey via horse-drawn carriage through the Grand Mountains to something called a teleportation gate which will get us into a city called Xyrus.

A book that I had read popped into my mind. I recalled reading about a floating piece of land built by an ancient organization of conjurers for the sole purpose of housing the most prestigious Mage Academy. A city was later built around the academy; both the City and the academy were named after the leader of the organization - Xyrus.

How was it possible to keep a piece of land, hundreds of kilometers long, afloat? Magnetism? Then the land beneath the city would be affected by it. Did the city have its own gravitational field?

Anyway!

This journey was going to be long. It's times like these that I wished modern transportation existed. In order to get to the city, we'd have to enter through one of the designated teleportation gates in the Grand Mountains, otherwise, it would easily take months to travel across towns to reach the gate below the actual city, which floated near the border of the Kingdom of Sapin and Darv.

One reason why my father pushed for us to go on this journey now was because his ex-party members had recently stopped by and were on their

way to the city of Xyrus. Going now, with them, meant that we would have three augmenters and two conjurers, along with my mother, who was a rare Emitter and my father, a B-class augmenter. While the mountain range didn't have any mana beasts, there were still the potential dangers of bandits and wild animals.

While my mother and father took care of packing all of the necessities, I packed my wooden sword and two books (Encyclopedia of Dicathen and Foundations of Mana Manipulation) for the journey.

By mid morning, we were ready to head out.

After tying my knapsack, containing my books and a couple of snacks, to my back and strapping my wooden sword to my waist, I grasped my mother's hand and followed my parents to meet their ex-party members.

Although I'd heard about them occasionally from father, I never visited home while they were rebuilding it, so it would be my first time meeting them.

The information I learned from my father about the party members of Twin Horns consisted of the following:

Helen Shard: Female augmenter, specializing in magic archery.

Adam Krensh: Male augmenter, whose main weapon was the spear.

Jasmine Flamesworth: Female augmenter, who specialized in speed with dual daggers.

Angela Rose: Female conjurer, specializing in Wind Magic.

Durden Walker: Male conjurer, specializing in Earth Magic.

We reached the inn they were staying at in Ashber and saw them out in front, near the stables.

My father, after hugging his ex-party members, exclaimed, "Fellas, I want you guys to meet my son, Arthur! Go on Art, introduce yourself."

Giving a slight half bow while looking up at them, I introduced myself.

"Hello. My father has told me great things about his fellow Twin Horns members. Thank you for traveling with us to Xyrus. We'll be in your hands."

"HAHAHA, what is this? Such manners! Are you sure he's your son, Rey?"

The one to respond was the Spear wielder, Adam. Taking a closer look at him, he seemed like the energetic, talkative type. While fairly good-looking, he had bright red hair tied in a messy poof at the end, almost like a flame, and a couple of bangs escaping from the hair tie, he reminded me of some sort of vagabond. His eyes were bright and almost seemed like they were always laughing. The first thing I noticed though, was the scar across his nose, reaching both cheeks.

I felt myself getting picked up.

"Awww...Isn't he just too precious? You should be glad that he doesn't look like you Reynolds."

Peeling my face away from what felt like a memory foam death trap before she suffocated me in those gigantic breasts, I took a good look at the woman who was trying to kill me. Boy was she pretty. I mean, while not as pretty as my mother, she gave off the whole "royal princess" vibe with her long blond hair that came to a curl at the ends and radiant green eyes that drooped slightly.

Just as my hands were about to give out and my face about to enter the twin abyssal hills, a strong pair of hands grabbed me by the knapsack strapped to my back, whisking me away from the well-endowed woman.

"Angela, you're hurting him," a deep voice grunted.

There I hung, like a kitten being carried by his mother by the scruff of his neck, unable to move.

My eyes stayed fixedly on the giant.

Easily passing two meters in height with a staff strapped to his back, the giant carefully lowered me back onto the ground and tidied my clothes gently.

How genteel.

I imaged riding on his shoulders like a mighty steed the whole way. I looked up at him, my eyes getting bigger as I pondered.

He had very narrow eyes and eyebrows that slanted down, giving him an almost innocent face, compared to his enormous body that stretched passed two meters. The short, scruffy black hair on his head completed the shaggy dog image on him.

Dusting my clothes off, I turned to face the woman that looked slightly younger than everyone else. Straight black hair that was half-tied at the back with a ribbon complementing her red, half-open eyes and curt-looking lips, making her seem very brusque.

"Mhm" she slightly nods and then turns away.

Ah... a woman of few words. How charming.

My eyes fixed on her as she walked away towards the stable, I spotted two short daggers strapped to her lower back, just above the hips.

The last member of the Twin Horns was Helen Shard. She patted my head lightly and flashed a charming smile at me. The word that I would use to describe Miss Helen would be sharp. Sharp eyes, sharp, perky nose, thin red lips, and a flat chest, almost boyish with her shoulder length hair tied tightly at the back. I can't help but be charmed by her charismatic ambience. She seemed to exude this 'we-can-do anything-if-we-believe' atmosphere from her pores that made her practically glow. Clothed in light leather armor covering her chest- I mean... breasts, with her bow and quiver strapped to her back, I couldn't help but compare her to an elf, but quickly abandoned that thought after I seeing her rounded ears.

I hopped onto the carriage furthest back with the help of a little mana reinforcing my legs. Lately, I'd gotten the hang of using my mana to reinforce my body. I had yet to fully test what I was capable of, for fear of giving my parents a heart attack by showing off too much, but it was getting a bit more natural to direct my mana from my core through my mana channels.

After our party finished loading in all of our travel necessities into the two carriages we were taking, we strapped in what I thought would be horses. It turned out, this world had domesticated mana beasts called Skitters for transportation. These giant lizards, with spikes across their backs and powerful claws, were D-class monsters that were a lot more efficient to use, albeit more expensive, than horses when travelling mountain terrain.

Let the journey begin!

By nightfall, the once distant mountain range seemed to have doubled in size. I wondered how big the Grand Mountain Range would be when we

reached the foot. Needless to say, I was excited to get out of the tiny outpost that was my hometown, Ashber.

We eventually stopped to set up camp near a small cluster of boulders. It was a good spot with the rocks blocking off nearly all of the wind and lot of scrap wood from fallen branches to use as campfire.

The one thing I detested the most about this body was how much sleep I required. Despite being asleep for most of the way, I still felt a bit heavyeyed after being awake for a mere few hours.

After setting up a couple of tents around the fire, my father and mother had begun conversing with the Twin Horns about old times when Helen sat down next to me and said nonchalantly, "I heard your pops say that you're some kind of genius mage... Is it true you've already awakened?"

Not knowing how to respond, I just replied with the truth.

She began asking me how I felt when I had awakened and what color my mana core currently was. By this time, a couple of curious ears perked up as Adam asked, "Hey Reynolds, do you mind if I test little Art?"

If I could've interjected, I might've said something along the lines of, 'Maybe mock-fighting with someone my age isn't a great idea since a normal threeyear-old's greatest accomplishments at this point would be successfully going up and down stairs with alternating feet, walking in a circle, and if he was really coordinated, balancing on one foot for several seconds,' but I guess these thoughts had never occurred to anyone here.

Both my father and mother seemed at least a bit hesitant at first, but trusting their old comrade, my father just replied, "Alright, but be careful. I haven't had the chance to teach him how to properly fight yet. We've just been doing light strength and mana exercises 'til now."

Adam got up from his makeshift log seat and looked around until he found a short stick he felt satisfied with.

"Come here Kid. Haha, let's see what you're made of!"