

“So, you must be Chelsea?” I asked, looking at the shorter girl with silver hair. She had a petite build, and lighter skin than her former Keeper counterpart. Her outfit was a loose-fitting set of overalls with the right shoulder strap hanging off the side. Beneath that, she wore a white t-shirt that had a visible amount of grime and grease staining it.

“Yup, that’s me!” She announced proudly, before bringing a hand up to her head. “Wow, it feels weird not knowing everything! But a good kind of weird! If you brought me here, does that mean you want my help coming up with stuff like James used to do?”

Seeing her warm smile, even at the idea that I had only made her so that she could help me, I could only shake my head. “Actually... James was reborn in my world.”

“Nope.” She shook her head resolutely. “Not possible. That doesn’t happen. Keepers get one shot, and one shot only. Them’s the rules!”

“It happened, Chel.” Terra spoke up next to me, the two of us sitting on the couch as we watched Chelsea. “His soul fragments managed to gather in an area technically outside of the current Keeper’s territory, allowing him to be reborn outside of the normal cycle of souls. Trust me, I had a hard time believing it at first, too.”

Chel blinked, staring towards Terra, her eyes going wide. “Wait... you mean you’re serious? James got a second chance?” When she saw Terra nod her head, Chel’s face went serious. “Okay, tell me what you want me to do.”

“That’s it?” I blinked, a bit shocked at her sudden change. However, she simply looked at me with a small smile.

“You just told me that my James is back in your world, and because of that you brought me back as well. James would never go bad, and you clearly didn’t tamper with my feelings, so there’s no way you want me to give you dirt on him. Only other option is that you want to give us a shot together, isn’t it? Not sure why, yet, but I’ll take it. Just tell me what I have to do to get it.”

I let out a brief chuckle when I heard that. These two really did have a lot of faith in each other. “I don’t really need you to do anything. I’ve already made the deal with him. We have a system in place to let Admin Room residents live a mortal life. Once you’re ready, one of my Goddesses will be by to help you pick your starting point. I’ve asked her to let you start in my kitsune world, Deckan.”

“Kitsune?” Chelsea blinked, clearly wanting a bit more information.

“Fox-type near-human species.” Terra explained with a knowing grin, at which point Chelsea’s eyes went wide again.

“Can I have one with nine tails?” She asked suddenly, seeming excited now.

“Uhm... they all only have one tail. Why do you specifically want nine?” I recalled Tsubaki’s appearance after she became a goddess, and her nine glowing tails.

“Because nine tails are justice! That’s what James would always say. Any time we made a near-human race with tails, he’d give them nine. Fox-type, cat-type, wolf-type, even monkey-type, all had nine tails when he made them. He told me that nine tails are a symbol of prosperity in his world, but really he just thought they looked cuter.” Chel stuck her petite chest out in pride as she said that, as if showing off her understanding of James.

I tried to imagine a lycan with nine tails. The image was certainly not as appealing as Tsubaki’s, as a lycan’s tails were considerably shorter and less soft. “Well, you can’t be born with nine. But... if you train properly, and get the perfect self class, you’ll be able to give yourself nine tails.”

“I’ll do it!” She nodded her head confidently at that. Hearing her conviction, I simply shook my head, calling for Udon. I had the sinking suspicion that the reason Tsubaki gave herself nine tails had something to do with Udon’s love for my old world’s culture. Maybe even something that Terra gave her from James’ world.

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“Chel’s finding her starting point now. It’ll be about nine months or so before she’s born. Before I take you to the world she’ll be in, I have a question I need to ask you. It’s... a rather important one, if I’m honest.” The Keeper looked towards James through his mirror, causing James to shift forward in his seat slightly.

“What is it?” He was happy to help out if he could, now that he knew that he had the chance to be with Chel again. Of course, he’d have to give her a couple of little tests to make sure that it was really her once she was old enough, but for now he was willing to give this Keeper the benefit of the doubt.

“The layer that you are from... are you sure that the other people of your race won’t be able to follow through the connections and invade the lower floors?”

James let out a light laugh when he heard the concern in the Keeper’s voice. “Ohh, so it was about that. I don’t think you really need to worry that much. The layer that I came from isn’t a civilized one. Aside from myself, the other people of my race are more interested in fighting to determine who is the strongest rather than researching how to make life better.”

“Although the ability to pass through the dimensional connections does theoretically exist within them, it’s not an ability that they are likely to use to the same extent that I did. And I had to go

through three or four different areas before I found this place.” James let out a faint shiver as he recalled the territories he had to cross through in pursuit of the world’s natural origin. It was only in a place as significant as this that he was confident in eventually making contact with the Keeper, so he used every trick he knew to survive the spatial passages and made his way here.

The Keeper let out a relieved sigh as he heard that. “Alright, that’s good to know. Then... is there anything else you want to do before I take you away from here? You probably won’t have the chance to return again after you’re gone.”

“I’m ready to leave whenever.” James said with a faint nod. “Any hints on where I’ll be going? That way I can prepare myself.”

The Keeper brought his hand up to massage his forehead a bit as he answered. “You’ll be going to Deckan. A world of, as Terra explained to Chel, ‘fox-type near-humans’. And no, they only have one tail.”

James clicked his tongue in annoyance when he heard that. “Genetics research is a no go, then?”

“Is there any justifiable reason that you want to genetically engineer a nine-tailed kitsune?” The Keeper asked in exasperation, before quickly adding on. “And ‘nine tails is justice’ is not a suitable answer.”

“Because nine tails--drat...” James was left to grumble for a moment. “Maybe... I can set them up so that they are able to grow the additional tails to serve as organic energy storage devices? It’ll take a lot of research, depending on the level of medicine in your world. Maybe I can finish it in a century, if I’m lucky? Then, nine tails won’t be a dream!”

The Keeper let out an almost defeated-sounding sigh. “If there is a *practical* reason for the additional tails, and you obtain national support for your research, I won’t get in the way.”

James bumped his fists together in excitement, nodding his head. “Then, I’m ready to go, chief! Just open the door, and I’ll send your fox planet into a scientific revolution!”

“I really hope I don’t regret this...” The Keeper said, before the reflection in the mirror shifted, displaying a vast, open plains. James could feel the presence of the mirror shifting, transforming from a simple transmission to a gateway. Without a moment to waste, he immediately jumped through the mirror.

The first thing that he noticed was the reduced gravity compared to what he was used to. His body felt lighter than ever, making him take a moment to stretch his limbs and test his mobility. Then, he reached out with his senses, and noticed that he was able to detect an unusual energy within the air, one that he had never felt before.

His curiosity was immediately piqued, and he turned around to question the Keeper, only to find that the mirror he jumped through was gone. Shrugging his shoulders, there was nothing that he could do but investigate on his own.

“Go straight for the source, or ask a local...” James mused out loud, observing his surroundings. The fact that he was able to sense the energy coming from below the surface indicated that it was probably the residual waves emitted by a particular ore. He knew that there were some rather unusual ores within the market, some of which had dangerous side-effects for the environment when mined.

On the other hand, if he were to simply ask a local about the existence of this energy, they would surely be able to answer his questions. The only problem was that they would likely think that he was a bit slow or sheltered for not already knowing the answer himself.

James didn't particularly want his first impression on this world to be one that put him in a bad light. After all, he was aiming to become a leading researcher in scientific studies! If he gave people reason to doubt his intelligence right from the start, that would only make his path harder.

“Hmm... maybe there's another way.” An idea occurred to James, and he sat down, crossing his legs. His eyes closing, he awoke the powerful detection energy that his race was born with. James himself didn't know the name of this ability, as he could not access the system while classified as a 'monster'. However, he knew that it was better than anything he had ever used when it came to detection... and had absolutely no other uses that he could find. He couldn't even create an avatar out of it.

“If this energy has been a part of their lives from the start, then it would have naturally shaped their culture. I've just got to search for a local, and observe them until they do something that resonates with this energy.” As he spoke, he was already sending his energy soaring through the air, investigating the area around himself. He had no way of knowing how far away the Keeper put him from civilization, so a wide-area search was the first thing that came to him

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Sitting on my throne in the citadel, I couldn't help but feel my eye twitching a bit. My world sight was focused on James, using my portal as a medium to connect the worlds. I was worried that he might act up if he was let loose and knew that he wasn't being monitored, so I naturally kept watch in secret to make sure.

*That... isn't that energy world sight, as well!? I saw the energy radiating from his body, such a thin energy that I would have missed it entirely had I not been using the same thing. You mean that his race is naturally born with the most powerful detection ability?*

This only further supported my theory that he was from an immensely powerful layer. Level five thousand might even be on the lower end of the spectrum for where he comes from. It was hard to say for sure, and I had no desire to personally investigate, as such a thing would only cause my rank to soar.

*Well... if he has world sight, then I suppose he really is suited to become a researcher.* I had experienced firsthand the assistance that world sight bestowed when conducting sensitive experiments. When I was fusing my ki of beginning, there was no way that I would have succeeded without that energy. However, at the same time, world sight did not interfere with any other energy, allowing the process to be uninterrupted no matter how sensitive it was.