Back in Alaxan, Kayafe, Alexander, and the Oathbound return from the Elemental slaying mission, teleporting into the throne room. The Oathbound visibly relax, and some exit the room, signifying that the mission is officially done.

Before Kayafe gets caught up in anything else, I teleport my clone to her side and contact her via telepathy.

“There’s a superstorm heading toward the Nexus. I’m fairly sure I can handle it together with the Mana Arc, but just in case, I want you to be there too. Plus, you can study it to help improve your [Sense Mana].”

“Alright, it was time to return anyway,” Kayafe responds.

“Something came up; I need to return to the Nexus,” Kayafe tells Alexander, her tail swaying gently behind her.

“Is it something bad?” he asks. “If it’s the eldritch invaders, then let us help.”

“It’s not them. It’s a natural disaster,” I say, shaking my head slightly.

“Natural disaster? We can provide aid if you need. Despite recent events, we have resources to spare,” he says, his eyes showing unusual interest.

He is a little too eager. There is something he wants, but what is it? Well, I don’t really have to guess, do I? I have valuable skills, and he clearly isn’t going to try and kidnap me, so he wants to get on my good side. I can’t really blame him though; seizing assets isn’t the only way to make them available to you, and I prefer that people try to make friends with me instead of the alternative.

“It hasn’t arrived yet, and I think we can stop it before it does any damage,” I say, rejecting his offer.

“What type of disaster is it?” Lin asks.

“A powerful mana storm,” Kayafe responds.

Lin frowns before looking at Ryan.

“Mana storms typically aren’t that dangerous,” Ryan says, pausing to collect his thoughts. “Sure, precautions have to be taken, but that is different for Nexuses. In my time studying in one, I’ve witnessed them be quite hazardous. That said, your people have lived in a Nexus for thousands of years, and surely you have ways of dealing with them. Unless…” He falls silent for a few moments.

“This is our fault, isn’t it?” he realizes. “If the storm created by our battle against the Dwarves didn’t tear itself apart and only *grew,* it would be far worse than anything I’ve seen.”

“Is this true?” Alexander turns to Kayafe, looking guilty.

She nods.

“I’ve never seen a superstorm myself, but from what I heard, the last one wiped out half of my people; that was about ten years ago. Alysara will know more.”

“Ten years ago…” Alexander furrows his brows. “Was that from when we fought the Cannibals?” Alexander asks, looking at me.

I nod hesitantly.

“All mana eventually flows to a Nexus,” I explain, “so when Legendary beings fight and release an enormous amount of mana, that will form a mana storm that eventually reaches a Nexus.”

“So when dozens of Legendary beings fight, the storm is that much worse…” Alexander says, looking horrified. “Tell me truthfully, just how powerful is this storm?”

“Strong enough that it will take both me and Kayafe to safely disperse it. But I’ve already built storm shelters that will keep everyone safe; no one will die; there will just be property damage.”

“Unacceptable. This storm was caused by us, so we need to stop it.” Alexander says, to which his Oathbound nod in agreement.

“Please don’t,” I say, to everyone’s surprise. Even Kayafe tilts her head in puzzlement. “I want the storm’s core. If it can rival the most powerful mana manipulators, it will surely be a very powerful material.”

“We can make another item equal to the Mana Arc with it,” I whisper to Kayafe telepathically.

Alexander and the Oathbound remain silent, seeing the telepathy spell between us.

“Or another Mana Arc. We could settle other Nexuses if we do.”

I hadn’t thought of that, but it makes sense.

“If we do that, we’ll want some way to teleport or open portals between Nexuses. Portals bypass the eldritch teleportation anchors, according to my recent tests, so I prefer to use portals.”

“Airships are good enough to travel between Nexuses; we don’t have to invent portals to make it work. The only real problem would be getting permission to fly over foreign nations,” Kayafe says.

“Portals would solve all those issues. Regardless, we’d probably have to evict powerful monsters from other Nexuses. I was thinking of using the core to fuel a floating island and expand the Nexus as that would involve fewer problems.”

“That’s a good idea, but keep in mind my deal with the Dungeon Core. We’ll break the pact if we don’t feed it enough mana.”

Well, whatever we do with the storm core, it's going to expand the Nexus; we can iron out the details later.

"Theoretically, we can make an important item with the storm core," Kayafe says, breaking the short silence.

I'm glad she isn't blabbing about our Mana Arc, even if she trusts Alexander with her life.

Alexander still looks troubled, but seeing how confident we are and that we'll even benefit from it makes him give up.

"Alright, but Ryan, I want you to monitor the storm and learn everything you can so that next time we can prevent it from happening."

"If we prove that we can harvest the storm, I'd prefer a notice so that we can continue to get materials," I say. "I don't blame you for the previous storm. You didn't know it'd be that powerful, and even if you did, no one in their right mind would assume people had settled a Nexus."

"Just let it be," Kayafe says, irked by Alexander's insistence to help. "The Nexus is fine now, and so long as I or Alysara are there, we should be able to deal with most threats."

"Fine," Alexander says. "I still want Ryan to study the storm; it will help him and all future mana scryers."

I tell Ryan that the storm is roughly two-thirds of the way to the Nexus. He probably has his own way of reaching it, and if not, Lin can teleport him.

With that sorted, Kayafe heads back to the Nexus with a series of portals.

* *

Kayafe POV:

"So what's the plan?" Kayafe asks Alysara.

"It should be pretty simple." Alysara shrugs and flicks a couple of gold-tipped tails. "Stuff the storm's core into this barrel, and the rest of the storm should dissipate." She points to a barrel made of super-solid mana that is large enough to fit a dozen people.

"Sounds simple enough, but I doubt it will be. No plan ever goes so smoothly, but there's not much else we can do to prepare, is there?"

Kayafe reminisces back on her adventures. Some of their best-laid plans fell apart even after they thought they had covered everything. Even after she scouted ahead, monsters sometimes pulled out a strange, unknown ability.

The storm is not a monster, but it is still an unknown, and that leaves room for Alysara's plan to go awry.

"No, there isn't. Either we overpower it, or we don't." Alysara swishes her long, beautiful tails.

That's a fair point, and even then, Alysara thought of potential failure and prepared storm shelters. She really is cautious. Most at her level of competency would not even consider the possibility of failure, and for the most part, their arrogance would be justified; even Dragons struggle to level a Skill beyond five hundred, let alone get two of them close to one thousand.

It makes Kayafe wonder what Alysara has gone through to become so cautious, and not just of other people but of her own abilities as well.

As she was lost in thought, Alysara was already moving. Or, more to the point, she was in almost constant motion at all times. If not with the version of herself that was currently in front of her engaging in conversation, then with one of her many duplicates. She was already loading that mana-crafted barrel she'd indicated onto a ship by lifting it with her [Manipulate Magic] Skill, and it seemed take-off procedures were already underway, no doubt at the hands of a duplicate already manning the controls.

The airship is fairly small, only needed to hold the barrel and two people, but it also has a viewing deck as they plan to study the storm in action for as long as they can afford.

"Let's go. I will be handling the Mana Arc with my real body, but one of my clones is already aboard the ship to handle the piloting and the capturing process," Alysara says.

Kayafe boards the ship, and it takes off, zooming toward the storm. She scouts ahead and notices the MM force long before she sees the storm.

How is it producing such powerful and far-reaching MM fields? Kayafe wonders.

Approaching the outer edges of the storm, she sees a maelstrom of spells flashing and violent clusters of mana whirling around. She even sees what looks to be several normal storm cores battling in this destructive arena.

The other storms clash, occasionally adding bursts of activity as the MM forces intertwine. The ambient mana is squished between the repelling forces, forming droplets of liquid and flakes of solid mana.

The amount of air, water, and ice mana has whipped the area into a powerful hurricane that pelts the airship with rain, snow, and hail, all the while threatening to blow the airship away. Alysara has already cast protection spells and is using her [Manipulate Magic] to keep the mana away; otherwise, it would be impossible to fly the airship.

Kayafe casts her perception as far as she can, where the MM force is several orders of magnitude stronger, and the sub-storms are more numerous and powerful. Flakes of super solid mana are formed between opposing sub-cores, and she even witnessed a light and dark storm core smash into each other and fuse, becoming a churning orb of chaos with an MM field several times stronger.

She watches the individual particles of mana dance around chaotically, the repulsion of dark and light continuously intensifying each other to ever greater heights that increase the MM forces beyond what she thought naturally possible.

Witnessing such herculean displays of the MM force, she is finally starting to understand its true nature and Alysara's lessons. The MM force isn't just a force. It is a bending of reality for mana. MM force is a warping of a field separate from space and time, fueled by the energy in mana. Somehow, the more intensity mana has, the greater the distortion applied, but where does all that energy come from?

It must come from the repulsion of opposite mana!

The closer opposite forms of mana are together, the more energy they get to repel each other. But if they are trapped in the same place, then that energy can't be released. They bounce off the ripples of the MM field, which redirects them back to another opposite mana. It's a feedback loop until the particles of mana gain so much energy they escape the core. Eventually, an equilibrium is reached between mana being pulled into the core and mana leaving.

This means normal storm cores, which do not have opposite mana, only form by natural attraction and only have an additive effect on the MM force, whereas in the previous case, it's multiplicative.

Ting! Sense Mana has obtained levels 328-330!

Ting! The Saintess of the Runalymo, Kayafe, the Runalymo, has reached unparalleled knowledge and mastery in the Sense Mana Skill!

* *

Post Chapter POV:

"Quickly! We'll miss her!" Klera, a brown-haired Lopradin, calls out behind her.

Autumn chases after her friend, running through the streets, nearly running into a couple. She deftly slides under a wagon that moved in front of her and shakes the dirt from her tail.

"Since when could you do that?!" Klera exclaims, witnessing her agile feat.

“Just now, I guess,” Autumn sheepishly says, scratching at an ear. “Anyways, aren’t we in a hurry?”

“Oh! Right!”

They return to running through the streets, and a moment later, they arrive at a growing crowd in front of the amphitheater.

The person they are waiting for has been attending this amphitheater every day, and people have taken notice. Now, people are waiting to catch a glimpse of the mysterious five-tailed Fylox that has not one but two of the Emperor’s own Oathbound as her guards.

At first, she didn’t take the rumors seriously, but after the recent world messages, she can’t help but think the arrival of the many-tailed Fylox and the battle isn’t a coincidence. Plus, there’s the return of Kayafe in the mix of all of this. There is definitely something more to all of this, and she needs to see it for herself.

“How’s your brother doing?” Klera asks as they wait for the Fylox.

“Hmm? Oh, him. Yeah, he’s doing fine,” Autumn says, trying her best to dodge the question.

“I heard he’s out sick; no one has seen him in a while. I’m glad he’s getting better.”

Just then, the crowd erupts in excitement. Young women and men squeal in admiration as an exceptionally beautiful “Fylox” arrives.

She is dressed in an elegant and decorated mana silk dress that does little to hide her voluptuous body. A diadem adorns her head made of a pinkish material with pinkish gems embedded in it. She wears more magical jewelry, but she can’t spend all day examining them.

She does indeed have five exceptionally long and beautiful tails with royal blue hair tipped in gold. She is youthful and walks with natural grace. There is no doubt that she has a Beauty Bond, and judging from how her normal [Analyze] returns empty-handed, she is seeing a projected image.

“Look how beautiful she is!” a Fylox girl exclaims.

“She’s so elegant and refined!” another says with starry eyes.

“She must be royalty; look at her Diadem!” a gorilla-like Klar says.

“Can we go now? Boss will be angry if I’m late,” a disinterested Lopradin says.

“Oh! I wish I could be her!” Klera says dreamily.

While everyone is distracted, Autumn closes her eyes and focuses on her third, opening it under the veil of a true illusion. Her ring grows hot and sears her finger as it works to hide her true nature.

She grits her teeth and bears the pain; she *must* get this information!

A flood of information washes over her mind, her third eye seeing through the illusory body and the true nature of the one before her.

Blessed of Myrou, Blessed of Venaro, Archive of Eternity, Saintess of Mana and Magic, Alysara, Runalymo, *progenitor*. Everything that she is, from her age to her Skills, is available to her.

Dangerous! Her [Sense Magic] and [Manipulate Magic] Skills are nearly one thousand!

She's not even Legendary tier yet, and her Skills are that powerful! But that all pales in comparison to the potential threat she brings. She is not just an Heirloom Progenitor. Her Heirloom tier is Artifact! Unheard of, yet that isn't even the problem. *Both* of her near-level-one-thousand Skills are in her race. Meaning that if she bears children, the world will be witness to the most powerful race ever.

Autumn closes her third eye, and her ring cools down. The fact that it reacted so strongly must be due to Alysara's perception. If she had been using even normal perceptive pressure, she would have broken through the illusion.

She cannot be allowed to live. **Alysara must die**!