

CHAPTER 28 – SHOPPING SPREE

It was the first concrete evidence he had of Fate playing a direct role in this new world. While a second per Fate didn't seem like much, Luke doubted there were many people with more Fate than him.

Which meant he *finally* had an advantage other people lacked.

Luke had less than a minute to peruse the so-called Company Shop, a place he could spend his hard-earned LP to gain items that hopefully would be useful.

Right now, all he was worried about was whether they had something that could save his life. It didn't matter if it cost all his points, he couldn't spend them if he was dead.

Since he could access the shop earlier because of his high Fate stat, that suggested to Luke's hazy mind that the quantities of stock might be limited in the Company Shop. And that they were on a first come, first serve basis.

Of course, by spending his LP, he would lower his ranking in the assessment. However, his ranking wouldn't matter much if he couldn't keep fighting.

Judging by his last look at the rankings, there were hundreds of people with more points than him. But he doubted there were many people with more Fate.

That meant he had first crack at the shop. And considering everything he knew so far about the Company, he felt increasingly sure that there would be limited supplies. It would breed competition and make people splurge their points when they might have otherwise kept them.

Even he was tempted, and for more than just some way to heal his broken body. Another bloody cough left him wishing the timer would speed up.

He knew he had to think this through, but it was getting difficult.

How these points helped the Company was anybody's guess, but clearly, they wanted people to use them in some capacity. Why else have a shop?

Unless it's a red herring and they want to see what happens to people who resist the urge?

That wasn't an option for Luke. Not if he wanted to see the next sunrise.

Glancing back at his status, his HP had dropped another few points. Same with his MP and SP. If the shop *didn't* have something to help him, he was going to have to choke down that slab of filthy meat and hope it didn't outright kill him.

Even if there were people like that woman who had 10 Fate, he had several times that amount. Granted, it only meant a few more seconds. If there was some ultra-special item in the shop, he wanted to have it.

He realized that was part of the game.

If there was some monstrously strong item that cost a huge amount of LP, but had a limited supply, any *he* purchased would mean less for somebody who might want to harm him.

This was, in a way, an extension of the overall competition.

If he didn't buy it, somebody else would and then use it against him. He could hope that wouldn't come to pass, but everything he'd seen so far had told him that he had to protect himself first and foremost.

He wasn't going to turn into a murderhobo, killing anybody who so much as looked at him funny. But he couldn't go on trusting people

weren't there to hurt him, giving them the benefit of the doubt each and every time.

If he had killed the Archer as soon as he realized the man was tracking him, things might have turned out very different. Instead, he waited until he was sure that they had come to harm him.

As much as he disliked it, Luke had to admit that his earlier belief that he could simply out-level any problem was naïve.

Earth might have been uplifted into the grander multiverse, but the world was destroyed all the same.

His little slice of human society had basically gone into apocalypse mode, minus the brain-eating zombies. He paused, then feverishly hoped there weren't zombies. He was willing to fight *anything* else.

The buzzing in his head reached a crescendo, and then a sense of pressure exerted itself behind his eyes. He opened the shop just as the familiar countdown hit 0 and faded.

There was a tiny trumpeting fanfare, very cheesy but adorably campy at the same time.

[Company Shop]

“Spend your hard-earned points at your nearest vendor to get ahead of the competition! It's not as if you can use them when you're dead, right? Though, your competition certainly can.”

[G-Grade Intern Rank Items]

[Health Potion (Common)]

(100/100)

(Consumable)

A rounded glass bottle containing a red liquid. Drink to recover HP. When this variety is purchased from the Company Shop, has a chance to be either lesser or minor in potency.

Price: 50LP

[Mana Potion (Common)]

(100/100)

(Consumable)

An Erlenmeyer flask glass bottle containing a shimmering blue liquid. Drink to recover MP. When this variety is purchased from the Company Shop, has a chance to be either lesser or minor in potency.

Price: 75LP

[Stamina Potion (Common)]

(100/100)

(Consumable)

A square glass bottle containing an emerald-green liquid. Drink to recover SP. When this variety is purchased from the Company Shop, has a chance to be either lesser or minor in potency.

Price: 35LP

[Item Upgrade Ticket (Epic)]

(Consumable)

A consumable ticket that increases the rarity by one level of any item, Epic rarity or lower. One-time use.

Price: 400LP

[Skill Upgrade Ticket (Common)]

(Consumable)

A consumable ticket that increases the rarity one level of any Class skill available for selection, Common rarity or lower. One-time use.

Price: 70LP

[Lockbox Key (Common)]

(Consumable)

A small silver key that opens any enchanted treasure chest, coffer or lockbox of common rarity or lower. One-time use only.

Price: 300LP

[Dungeon Key]

(10/10)

A heavy key carved out of stone that grants access to most G-Grade Dungeons. Has a high chance to break after use.

Price: 100LP

[Stat Potion]

(5/5)

A bottled potion that endlessly changes in color. When drunk, permanently increases one of your stats, selected at random. Most species below High G-Grade may undergo discomfort when imbibing this potion.

Price: 200LP

[Loot Coin]

(Consumable)

Insert this coin into a treasure chest of Epic or lower in order to double the quantity of loot contained within. Typically dissolves after use.

Price: 200LP

[Training Manual (Uncommon)]

(Consumable)

A tightly bound magical scroll filled with teachings suitable only for newcomers to the multiverse. When read, increases your Class' novice skill gain rate for 24 hours.

Price: 250LP

[Ration Box (Common)]

(Consumable)

Enough food and water for (10) days, protected from rot and disease.

Price: 200LP

[Health Potion Box (Common)]

(10/10)

(Consumable)

A box containing (5) lesser health potions. A rounded glass bottle containing a red liquid. Drink to recover HP. When purchased from the Company Shop, has a chance to be either lesser or minor in potency.

Price: 200LP

[Mana Potion Box (Common)]

(10/10)

(Consumable)

A box containing (5) lesser health potions. An Erlenmeyer flask glass bottle containing a shimmering blue liquid. Drink to recover MP. When purchased from the Company Shop, has a chance to be either lesser or minor in potency.

Price: 325LP

[Stamina Potion Box (Common)]

(10/10)

(Consumable)

A box containing (5) lesser health potions. A glass bottle containing an emerald-green liquid. Drink to recover SP. When purchased from the Company Shop, has a chance to be either lesser or minor in potency.

Price: 150LP

[Antidote (Common)]

(100/100)

(Consumable)

A glass bottle containing a semi-clear liquid. Drink to remove most toxins and poisons. When purchased from the Company Shop, has a chance to be either lesser or minor in potency.

Price: 65LP

[Battle Manual (Epic)]

(10/10)

(Consumable)

A magical scroll that, once used, will temporarily amplify a single skill to Epic rarity.

Price: 800LP

[Safety Ring (Rare)]

(10/10)

(Accessory)

An unassuming ring that breaks when your HP falls too low, preventing life-threatening damage.

Price: 250LP

[Teleport Scroll (Epic)]

(5/5)

(Consumable)

A magical scroll inscribed with a teleportation spell. Once invoked, it will teleport you to a random, habitable space within 1 mile.

Price: 150LP

[Goblet of Illusion (Limited)]

(5/5)

(Consumable)

A goblet filled with a magical elixir, by mixing a piece of an object into the liquid and imbibing the resulting brew, you will temporarily turn into that object. Wears off if you take damage.

Price: 200LP

[Golden Ginger Pill (Epic)]

(1/1)

(Consumable)

A tiny golden pill the size of a pea. This rare empowering medicine significantly increases your HP, MP, and SP regeneration rates for 24 hours.

Price: 300LP

[Bastion Crystal (Unique)]

(10/10)

A large crystal that exudes a powerful, protective influence. Place this down to render the surrounding area immune to faction claim. Provides wards and protective effects that can resist the powers of the Four Kings at the cost of mana and LP.

Price: 1,000LP

[Identification Scroll (Common)]

(Consumable)

A simple identifying scroll. Unrolling it and placing an obscured item on the designated spot will reveal the item for you.

Price: 10LP

[Intricate Identification Scroll (Uncommon)]

(Consumable)

A complex scroll set into parchment that when used pierces the enigmatic veil around powerful items, identifying enchantments and unlocking the item's power.

Price: 25LP

[Featherfall Potion (Uncommon)]

(10/10)

(Consumable)

A swirling mix of gaseous liquid that shimmers like the night sky. When imbibed, prevents falling damage for 1 hour.

Price: 100LP

[Enchantment Sealing Scroll (Common)]

(5/5)

(Consumable)

An intricately designed scroll that allows a single enchantment of Common rarity or lower to be removed from an item and sealed within. The item is destroyed in the process.

Price: 200LP

Luke's eyes widened at the overwhelming spread of choices before him. He had precious little time ahead of the competition to make his selections and spend his hard-earned LP.

Many of the high value items were extremely limited in quantity. Considering the price on most of them, he wasn't going to be able to buy out the entire stock of almost any item.

Luke was entirely on his own. Groups working together would be able to selectively use their LP to purchase a wide variety of goods. Of course, those precious items would be split between them. It was obviously better to have vast quantities of LP to spend on only yourself.

A group, however, would find it easier to stock up on potions, with each person buying a different supply.

It all had the same price. The more LP spent, the lower your ranking. But Luke intended to use whatever he bought to further his ranking in the long run.

There was still nearly a month left in the assessment.

He was going to achieve more than basic survival. He planned on *winning* for once in his life, and moving on to greater and better things.

The [Antidote] was first. He bought 2, just in case, and watched as the counter dropped to 98/100.

A moment later, two thin vials of slightly cloudy water appeared in his lap. Luke downed one immediately and continued looking for what else he could afford.

With the monsters he recently killed and the assassins, he had just 597 LP to spend. After the 2 antidotes, he had 467.

He felt the pressure to make decisions quickly. Decisions that would affect the course of this competition.

Big ticket items like the [Battle Manual (Epic)] were out of the question. That was more LP than he even had to his name. Which was fine.

He had just enough LP to purchase the [Golden Ginger Pill (Epic)] with a little left over for a few potions if he wanted. It was the rarest item in the entire store, with only a single one in the entire shop. Most importantly, it was cheap enough that he could purchase it and stop anybody else from getting it.

Plus, it would be an ace in the hole. If he chose not to use it immediately, he could guard it against a time in which he really needed it.

He hadn't seen a single System-based item or skill use the word "significantly" ever, so that alone made it seem worth it. What really drew his attention was that it didn't shortcut any sort of power.

It didn't give him a higher skill by magic, it amplified his own strengths so that he could earn his way.

That felt right. He didn't like the shortcuts the battle manuals offered.

A tiny piece of paper, twisted at the ends and with a spherical bulge in the center, dropped into his lap as he confirmed his purchase.

With only 167LP left, Luke was priced out of a lot of items. He could buy the stamina potion box but didn't particularly see the need.

Rations were hilariously expensive, which gave him pause, but then again, a lot of things that weren't limited seemed more expensive.

With his remaining points, Luke bought a single health potion, and then a dungeon key.

Both dropped into his lap. The potion didn't have long before he uncorked it and drank down its contents without even noticing the rarity it had spawned at.

The pain in his leg subsided, and the numerous wounds across his body began to knit together. He breathed a deep sigh of relief.

He had blown all but 17 of his points, but the trade-off seemed well worth it. He was alive, and soon would be ready to face off against the horrors of the assessment test once more.