

The Fall 216

Chapter 216: Appeasing the Spirit

Zac unhesitantly punched out, and a pained yelp escaped from the beast that tried to ambush him.

The next moment the edge of an axe fell down, cutting the animal's head clean off. Zac stopped to look down at the thing he just killed. He had to say it looked quite a bit like a rat, but one as big as a horse. Its legs were also slightly longer, and its tail was a short stub, and finally its black fur was so thick and stiff that it almost looked like quills rather than hair.

Everything happened so quickly that Zac didn't have time to use his investigative skill on it, but if it truly was a rat there would likely be a lot more of them. But judging by the amount of cosmic energy he received it wasn't very strong, perhaps somewhere around level 40. Most trial takers shouldn't have much trouble with this thing.

Next Zac opened up the ladders once again as he walked toward the beast. He threw the carcass of the rat-beast inside his pouch but soon dumped the body by the side of the path once again. He wanted to test out whether there was any value in the carcass, but since he didn't move a single spot from it he deemed it mostly worthless.

Judging from the mangy fur and nasty smell the meat wouldn't be serviceable either, and Zac would rather just eat the boring fasting pills than this thing. But he was still quite happy with the results.

While killing the beast hadn't helped his Gatherer rank, it did help with his Hunter rank since it jumped up a couple of thousand spots. That meant that killing other trial takers wasn't the only method to try for the top rewards on the point ladder, which was great news for Zac.

Because if there was one thing he was good at, it was the wholesale slaughter of beasts.

Zac kept going up along the mountain paths, keeping an eye out for other trial takers or beasts. As he ascended the mountain he noticed that the cosmic energy was gradually improving the further up he got.

It wasn't surprising that the elite would build their residences at the spots with the most energy, but he wondered why the mountain worked like this. His own mountain was different since the valley was the place with the most concentrated energy there. Perhaps massive arrays were placed inside the mountains to redirect the energies toward the top.

Disappointingly enough he only encountered three more beasts, which were simply called Mountain Rats according to his skill, in thirty minutes of travel. It made him wonder if his plan of gaining points from animals was a no-go. There simply was too few of them to go have any significant impact on the ladder.

He also started to suspect that something was odd about this mountain. Most of the mountains he could see from looking around were filled with structures and caves, but he was almost at the top and he hadn't seen a single building since the small temple.

He hoped it was because the past owner of the mountain was a real big shot who could keep most of the mountain for himself, rather than it being a trash mountain no one had bothered with for some reason.

Finally, he found himself at the crest of the mountain, and had to take a moment to look at the scene with awe. It was completely flat like someone had cleanly cut the whole tip off in a mighty swing of a sword. He could see it was the same with many of the other peaks, but it still was extremely impressive this up close.

Most of the summit was empty, and only occupied by a large beautiful square, and Zac couldn't help but feel some wonder as he stepped on the enormous tiles. Each of the tiles was over three meters across and gave off a shimmering luster. It looked as though they were made by pristine marble, but golden veins ran across them.

More importantly, it felt as though they somehow cleansed the area with a soothing aura. Zac suddenly got an idea and pressed down his axe between two tiles. With a twist he managed to lift it up, and to his surprise the tile weighed almost as much as a car. He immediately threw the flooring into his pouch.

His ranking didn't change from the tile, but he didn't care about that. He had found a great material to renovate the surroundings of his Dao Repository.

Since they were going to undergo the Inheritance trials pretty soon he really needed to appease the tool spirit. He couldn't risk Brazla throwing a wrench in his and Ogras' plans because he wasn't happy about his view. This flooring would be perfect to surround the Repository with, and they weren't very hard to yank out of the ground.

Zac set about dismantling the entire square, gaining speed with every tile ripped loose. In just thirty minutes half of the flooring was dismantled, and he was closing in on the core of the summit.

In the center of the square, a small-sized palace was placed. He still hadn't gotten close to it as he was saving it for later. Instead, he methodically slammed his axe into the ground once again and put away the tile after yanking it loose.

The tiles were starting to have an effect, as he'd gained two spots from harvesting them. That might not sound like much, but he'd spent half an hour on them, and many others should have found treasures themselves during that time.

That he not only kept his spot but even advanced proved that these tiles were more than just beautiful. Unfortunately, he wasn't able to detile the whole summit before voices reached his ears. Not long after a group of ten walked up together, warily looking around.

Zac frowned when he saw them as he immediately opened up the ladders. The group was in the bottom of the barrel when it came to treasure, but two of them were higher on the hunter list than he was, meaning they'd likely killed a few people on the way up here.

All of them wore the same type of clothes, and it was pretty clear they were from some army. However, since the design of the clothes was foreign to him these people were likely from the other planet.

"Enemy ahead," a lanky man said as soon as he spotted Zac who was in the middle of retrieving another tile.

“What the hell? He’s stealing the floor?” one of the men immediately burst out, eliciting guffaws from a few of the soldiers.

“Check his ladder! Those tiles must be worth a fortune!” another man suddenly shouted, and the others quickly turned deadly serious as they looked upon him.

A burly man, who appeared to be their leader judging by his slightly more elaborate getup, took a step toward Zac.

“Hand over your Cosmos Sack, and we’ll let you leave with your life,” he curtly said.

Zac’s brows rose a bit. It appeared these people felt there was safety in numbers, especially when his hunter ranking was so low.

“I’ll say the same to you. Leave your sacks and piss off this mountain,” Zac retorted as stashed another tile.

“Fourth formation,” the leader grunted, and the squad was clearly ready for that command.

All of them immediately started to radiate a respectable amount of power, which was all focused on the leader who had taken out two swords. Zac looked on with interest because if he wasn’t wrong they were utilizing a War Array. The only other explanation was that all of the others were somehow support Classes.

The veins of the leader started to bulge, and the air around him vibrated by the huge infusion of power. Clearly his strength had gone up a couple of tiers from the infusion. The others stood rooted in place, not making any moves against Zac.

Two thirds of the people seemed to be continuously infusing their leader with power, whereas the last third erected a dense shield around everyone besides the leader. Zac had to admit that it was a pretty good setup. The largest problem with wars was the huge disparity in power between people, where one powerhouse could decimate thousands of warriors.

But the other planet had already found the solution to this. They made their strongest person far stronger, and Zac would have to guess that the effect was far better than his own Hatchetman’s Rage.

He briefly wondered just how powerful he would become if he got a squad of demon soldiers to empower him in the same way. It would be quite the scene. But Zac didn’t have time to dream any longer as the leader was upon him with surprising speed, his two swords already aiming to cut him in two.

The soldier didn’t want to use any time it appeared, and the skill he used contained an extreme amount of force. Both swords shone in a sinister light, but Zac couldn’t figure out just what type of element it contained.

At first, he was about to clash with the attack with his axe, but at the last moment changed his mind and desperately scrambled out of the way. It wasn’t due to fear he’d lose from the exchange, but rather fear that the shockwave might damage the tiles around him.

The swords were already following him, aiming to stab him in his back, but he flashed away with [Loamwalker], arriving in front of the turtling soldiers. He slammed down his axe with a little bit of power to test its strength and was impressed with how sturdy it was.

He wasn't interested in entertaining these people any longer though, and the next strike contained both his Dao of Heaviness and his full force. The shield immediately cracked, which clearly hurt the defenders as they staggered and even coughed out some blood.

The next moment all of them were dead, as a lightning-quick [Chop] had killed them before they had the time to take out their talismans or erect new defenses. He was surprised to see that the sacks on the bodies automatically turned into streams of light that went into his pouch. However, he didn't have time to check it out, as there was one more of them.

Zac turned around to see the leader unhesitatingly crush his token, but Zac flashed in front of him and with a Sharpness-empowered strike cleanly killed him as well.

It was a bit odd. The first two Zac saw escape with the tokens immediately disappeared, whereas Revor and this leader took a moment before they were whisked away.

The System wasn't very benevolent, and it thrived on conflict. He already felt it noteworthy that it allowed escaping at all. That it would add some hidden caveats felt natural, and Zac was starting to believe that it might have to do with either the ladders or wealth.

The higher one was on the ladder the longer it would take to escape. That way the weaklings might be able to escape, but the stronger people would be stuck in life-and-death battles to a higher degree. Perhaps it would take himself minutes to disappear due to his attribute or accumulated wealth, making it useless in battle.

He was also curious to see how the system dealt with kills that happened during the seconds after the tokens were crushed but they still hadn't disappeared. Soon he got the answer. The decapitated corpse disappeared, but the Cosmos Sack went into his own pouch instead.

After some hesitation he threw the bodies into his pouch as well before resuming his detiling. In another fifteen minutes the square was picked clean, and he instead focused his attention to the palace in the center of the summit.

He stopped some ways from the entrance and took out one of the bodies from before and unceremoniously chucked it over the decorative wall towards the inner area of the courtyard. However, nothing happened as the corpse thumped down on the ground.

Zac still activated his [Mental Fortress] to the max, and after some deliberation he added [Nature's Barrier] as well. All arrays weren't necessarily mental attacks. The crystal he found contained all sorts of arrays, including pure murder formations that summoned all kinds of horrifying attacks.

He warily stepped toward the vaulted gates his eyes darting back and forth, looking for any signs of danger.