

The Fall 218

Chapter 218: Alchemist's Mountain

Zac was almost at the crest of the mountain housing the Alchemist Palace, as he'd named the mansion due to what he hoped to find inside.

He'd entered a couple of buildings on the way up, but he hadn't found much of value apart from a few minor pills and Crystals. After having visited a couple of buildings it was pretty clear that a correlation between the power of the defenses and how high up on a mountain it was located.

He could essentially burst through the ones close to the foot of the mountain without even activating his defenses. But these domiciles were either for servants or low disciples and it wasn't really worth the time for Zac to enter. But from somewhere at the mid he needed to activate at least [Mental Fortress] to avoid any mishaps.

As for the pure physical traps he could pretty much tank them with his body, though it hurt more the higher up he went. Endurance was already his highest attribute by now, and it clearly showed as he shrugged off everything from bolts to fireballs as he crashed through the buildings.

He also robbed a trio of cultivators from the other world who went down the mountain with disappointment afterward. Interestingly enough new sacks spawned on their belts just a few seconds after they were robbed of their original ones.

However, after seeing that he only caught some basic necessities and nothing of value he decided to reevaluate his tactics. At least, for now, he'd check the ladders before robbing people. It was true that many a little makes a mickle, but there was no point to rob a bunch of tents and sleeping bags.

The mountain he was currently scaling was far more cultivated compared to the last one, and Zac was currently running up along one of the multiple sets of stairs that all seemed to be leading to the top. He also hadn't encountered a single animal since passing the half-way point, likely because there was no vegetation from that point.

At first, he was a bit worried about the lack of fauna, but then he remembered how it looked like around his Tree of Ascension. Due to its high energy requirements it killed and absorbed all life in the vicinity. Perhaps the hanging gardens were doing the same and had long ago killed off all other life on the mountain.

Zac was filled with excitement as he closed in on the crest, but a huge shockwave from above stopped him in his tracks. Someone was fighting up above, and the power they displayed wasn't a joke.

He frowned and slowly walked up, careful to not make any loud sounds. The cosmic energies in the air surged as he walked up the last sets of stairs, and not long after a rumble shook the whole mountain.

Zac's axe was already in his hands as he looked over the edge, and the sight made Zac frown. Over a hundred people were actually on the mountain, almost all of them decked in the familiar attire of the Medhin Empire. Most were sitting down as if in meditation, and the only exceptions were three people.

One of them was a young man with an arrogant demeanor who was decked in a golden robe. He stood unblemished in front of the sitting army, and it was clear they were using a War Array to empower him as he glowed with power. It also looked like he had a large blue circle tattooed in his forehead.

The other two weren't as well off. One of them might be dead, lying motionlessly on the ground in a pool of his own blood. Above him stood a woman who was bleeding quite heavily as well, but clearly wasn't ready to give up yet.

What was more surprising was that Zac actually recognized the two. It was Thea Marshall and the shield-bearing bodyguard who had accompanied her and Henry Marshall to the Auction a month ago. When he realized who the two were his eyes couldn't help once again turn to the young man who seemed to have defeated them without much of a problem.

For a second he pondered whether he should retreat, but after a bit he took the final steps up the stairs with a sigh. He couldn't let the third ranker and one of the main combatants against the Incursions die here. It might cause the whole Marshall clan to collapse, and they were only other main force he could partner with at the moment, what with the tense situation with the New World Government.

The young man threw a glance at Zac when he appeared, but he clearly discounted him as a non-threat. Instead, he summoned what appeared to be a tornado of wild energies in his hand and pointed it toward Thea. It flashed in a few colors and reminded Zac of the horn of the Star Ox. However, this jumble of energies seemed to have mainly light blue and brown energies, compared to the rainbow of the beast horn.

Thea's eyes thinned and she grabbed the body of the bodyguard and made to retreat, but a huge fractal appeared above her, somehow rooting her in place. Zac couldn't sense anything apart from the chaotic swirl from the man and guessed that it was something created by the army.

"You can't just leave after your words, woman," the man said with a sneer. "The punishment for rejecting the divine invitation is death."

The next moment he pushed the chaotic jumble of energies forward, and it trembled with power as it closed in on her. Zac saw no option so he used [Loamwalker] to flash in front of her, and covered the trio with his defensive skill as he launched a Dao-Infused [Chop] at the incoming attack.

The two strikes clashed with a tremendous explosion, and Zac was barely able to keep himself from getting pushed off the mountain as he was blanketed by the wild energies that ripped through his leaves. Thea and the bodyguard were better off as Zac soaked most of the damage, and she confusedly looked up at his broad back.

Thea's eyes widened in shock when she saw who it was, but they quickly refocused on their enemy.

"Why are you here? You need to leave, those soldiers are empowering that man to crazy levels," she frantically whispered, blood running down her mouth.

"I know," Zac said with a shrug as he turned back toward the man who finally had turned his eyes toward him.

"Who are you? The punishment for interfering in my divine judgment is death," he angrily said as he charged up another chaotic jumble in his hands.

Zac only snorted in response as he tried to use [Inquisitive Eye] on his enemy. Unfortunately it failed, apart from showing the man's standing on the ladder. And this person was actually on the fourteenth spot on the Hunter Ladder. This man was clearly a rabid animal from his ranking and attitude. Anyone that high up must have started killing people from the get-go, rather than hunting for treasures.

Now that Zac had the time to properly look at the attack he felt somewhat certain it was a mix of two Daos, mainly something related to wind and something earth-related, which explained the colors. Perhaps the mixing of Daos representing gaseous and solid matter was making the resulting attack extremely unstable, turning it into a bomb.

"I'm guessing you're one of the Medhin?" Zac said as he cracked his neck. "Leave your Cosmos Sack and crush your token, and I'll allow you to leave."

The young man blankly stared for a few seconds until he started to wildly laugh. Meanwhile, the soldiers behind him started to radiate an unrestrained killing intent that could almost match Zac's own. These people truly seemed to be fanatics judging by how angry they became from Zac's comment.

"Allow me to leave? My will is the divine will, only the Great Lord can tell me what to do," he said, infusing his skill with far more power.

However, by now Zac had managed to infuse all the Cosmic Energy he needed into his forearm, and the space above the young man shattered.

"Shield!" one of the captains immediately roared, and a thick golden glow enveloped the young man before the wooden hand even had time to emerge half-way.

But the young royal wasn't the target of the hand as it emerged with lightning speed and slammed down right in the middle of the sitting army. They had a sturdy shield as well, but it wasn't enough to block [Nature's Punishment] infused with the Dao of Heaviness.

A tremendous sound echoed out from the mountain, and it almost seemed the gargantuan hand would crack the summit in two. Over two-thirds of the soldiers were turned into meat paste from the attack, and most of the others were wounded or dying from the shockwave.

"You!" the young man roared in anger, but before he had time to react Zac was upon him with determination in his eyes.

"Lord Tyrbat!" one of the soldiers shouted and once again tried to start up the infusion of power.

But suddenly his throat was cut right open and he started to bleed out with widened eyes. The same scene happened amongst most of the living soldiers, and they fell one by one.

Meanwhile Zac swung his axe down imbued with the Dao of Sharpness, the edge aiming straight for the young man's head. Madness was evident in Tyrbat's eyes, and he redirected the attack he'd charged up to intercept Zac's strike.

Zac's swing was like a flash of lightning, cutting straight through the attack, releasing torrential energies all over him. Zac activated a defensive charge from his robe the last second and the axe kept going straight down. But Tyrbat had excellent reflexes and nimbly dodged, displaying great speed even without the help of the War Array.

Zac didn't want to relent though and immediately followed up with another strike. Unfortunately one of the rings on the man's hands lit up and a shield activated that actually managed to block Zac's strike. Meanwhile Tyrbat took out a radiant sphere from his Cosmos Sack.

The ball's glow quickly increased in intensity, reminding Zac of the Lightning Punishment Arrays he still had in his possession. Zac didn't want to let his enemy let this thing go off and desperately tried to swing at the man. But once again a second ring on his hands lit up, creating another impenetrable shield. Meanwhile, a brown shimmer covered the whole body of the Medhin royal.

The next moment the ball exploded, and Zac pushed backward to avoid the blast zone, but his face still got singed by the heat. The next moment another much louder explosion erupted behind him, and he turned around to see that the royal had appeared right between Thea and her downed bodyguard, wildly laughing.

Something had detonated the moment he arrived as he stood in the middle of a crater, but he himself was unhurt. The brown shimmer around him was likely another defensive measure to protect himself while he let the bomb explode right in his hands. It was an extremely effective tactic, as the other two were far worse off than Zac. If the bodyguard wasn't dead before, he surely was now, as half of his body was blasted into nothingness.

Thea was still alive, though she barely managed to stay conscious. Judging by the less damaged floor beneath her feet she had used some defensive skill or talisman to mitigate the effect of the attack. But clearly it was only partly effective since her wounds had gotten much more serious.

Zac grunted and set off again with [Loamwalker] keeping his eyes peeled for any treasure Tyrbat took out. The man was trying to kill them with his massive wealth it looked like, and he couldn't let this go on. He swung his axe horizontally, once again imbuing it with the Dao of Sharpness. A bracelet on the man's hands flashed into life once again, and he briefly turned translucent, letting the blade cut right through him.

However, Zac was ready with a follow up as he threw a staggered punch empowered with Heaviness right at the man's face. The effect of the ring was limited, and luckily enough it ran out just before the fist reached his head. A tremendous punch hit the man straight in his temple, slamming him straight down into the ground with enough force to make the ground shake.

Normally his head should have been splattered all over the ground, but somehow he was still conscious, though barely. Zac wouldn't stop here, and chopped down with finality.

"IMPOSSIBLE!" the man screamed as torrential amounts of cosmic energy gathered around him.

But Zac had seen so many last-ditch attacks by now that he didn't even flinch, and with a resounding slam decapitated the young royal. Zac checked his ladder as he was inundated with energy from the kill, and wasn't too surprised to see that he had risen considerably in rankings, actually reaching top 10 on the Hunter ladder.

He briefly wondered what troubles would come from killing one of the top rankers of the other world. The soldier had called him Lord Tyrbat, and Zac remembered he held the 9th spot at the ladder, being level 69.

He was likely one of the weaker family members of the Medhin family, but he was still a dangerous opponent. Not necessarily through his own power, but through his army and his treasures. If Zac hadn't been able to kill off most of the soldiers boosting Tyrbat it would likely have been a far tougher fight.

The fact that one of the royals possessed a private army to empower them meant that it was likely the same with the others. In the beginning he thought that only the Dominators and perhaps the emperors would pose a threat, but perhaps that wasn't the whole picture.

A wet cough refocused Zac's attention to Thea who was arduously getting up to a sitting position. Zac threw a last glance at the dead royal before heading over to her. She warily frowned when she saw his approach, but relaxed when she saw him take out a vial.

"A top-grade healing pill," Zac said and threw it over.

Thea hesitated a bit before she caught the vial and took out a pill. She swallowed it after looking it over, nodding toward Zac.

"Thank you," she simply said as she closed her eyes to focus on recuperation.