

The Fall 219

Chapter 219: Alliance

Zac surveyed the battlefield and finally walked over to the corpse of the Medhin member. He was still decked in all kinds of expensive-looking rings and amulets, and Zac unceremoniously threw the body into his sack so that he could look over them later.

He already knew from before that the Medhin had monopolized all the best stuff from their empire, and the power of the rings proved that the man's equipment might be even better than Zac's own.

Next, he walked through the whole army, looking at each and everyone for anything that could be of value. Only the things inside the sacks were transferred over automatically upon a kill, but not the things on their bodies. But it seemed there wasn't really anything of interest.

Finally, he walked over to the downed bodyguard. A large part of his torso was completely ripped off, leaving a gristly wound as he blankly stared up at the sky. Zac sighed and bent down to close his eyes, before turning his attention to the shield that lay not too far from him.

It was a different one from the shield he saw this man wear at the auction, and it was clearly of high quality. It was slightly dented but otherwise in good condition. That was saying something because Zac had felt the power of the strikes even when he was down on the stairs. It wasn't the shield that failed, but the user's endurance was simply insufficient to bear the power of Tyrbat.

He walked over to the shield and lifted it up, and found it was extremely heavy, making it feel like he was holding a huge boulder. It was also quite large, covering everything from his head down to his knees when he held it up. He could also see that it had a string of fractals that ran all over the inside of it.

It might not be a Spiritual Tool like he wanted, but it was far superior to anything he possessed at the moment and would have no problem surviving through the quest to block 5 000 attacks. Unfortunately he'd found out that he couldn't advance the quests in his human form. Otherwise he could have finished it by running down the mountain to the beasts for a couple of hours.

It turned out that his class quests only were active while he actually had his class, so he would need to turn back into an undead before working on them. However, that posed a bit of a problem at the moment.

It was far easier to turn back to a human for Zac at the moment since Miasma was both the source of life and fighting strength for an undead. It was different for a Human though. Expending all his Cosmic Energy wouldn't have any other effect than completely exhausting him and making him a bit nauseated.

He had a theory that he might be able to turn back into an undead by bleeding himself out since that should empty him of all his vitality. But he wasn't in the mood to try that out unless at back at home with someone to watch over him. Also, there might be other restrictions in place, such as how often he could turn.

However, even though the shield would be useful to him he didn't put it in his bag. It belonged to the Marshall clan, and the man lying next to him had sacrificed his life to protect Thea from an attack. Perhaps she would be unwilling to hand it over.

"Just take it," Thea suddenly said without opening her eyes, making Zac's brows rise.

Was the woman a psychic? His eyes slightly thinned and he looked over to the girl calmly sitting ten meters away from him. In response, she opened her eyes and leveled her piercing blue stare toward him.

"You were stomping around like a rhino, I heard what you were doing," she calmly said added before closing her eyes again.

Zac didn't comment, but simply put the shield into his bag. Since he'd looted the battlefield it was time for Zac to go over the spoils, so he focused his attention on his Cosmos Sack.

When he looked inside he was shocked to see the amount of stuff inside. There was a huge tent along with all kinds of foods and delicacies, and an enormous amount of pelts and pillows. The army must each have taken a part of the camp with them to bring it all, as not even Zac himself could carry that much stuff.

"Just how did these people find each other so quickly?" Zac muttered to himself.

"They just needed to touch when they got teleported and they'd end up at the same place. The tutorial pixies told everyone that, have you forgotten?" Thea said in response without opening her eyes.

"Well, I didn't go to the tutorial, so no one told me," Zac said with a shrug.

"What? You're a mortal?" she said, her eyes opening in shock. "Then why are you so strong?"

"Lucky, I guess," Zac muttered as he gazed upon the palace at the other side of the summit.

It was both larger and in better shape compared to the palace he entered on the last mountain, which might hint that the protections in place were superior as well. He could only hope that it was somehow calibrated to a reasonable strength. Otherwise he would have to scale the mountain somehow to reach the hidden gardens.

But he had a strong feeling there were protections in place against that in place, which is why he went up the mountain the normal way in the first place. He wouldn't do any mountain climbing unless he had to. But suddenly he was dragged out of his thoughts as he noticed Thea was glaring at him with red eyes.

"Uh, are you okay?" Zac hesitantly said, afraid that she wanted her shield back.

"Every day," said with a hollow voice. "Every day I've fought with my life on the line, one battle after another. Just so that I can protect my family and humanity. But I couldn't even save John. Instead, he had to sacrifice himself to keep me alive."

Zac didn't know what to say and only looked at Thea with some sadness in his eyes. He knew just how it was to feel powerless. Every day the first month on the island he'd spent sleepless nights being overcome with despair, not knowing whether he'd ever get off the island alive, or whether his family was alive.

"Meanwhile you just keep getting stronger, increasing the distance between yourself and the rest of us. We thought you might have gained a top grade cultivation manual from the tutorial, as that was the

only thing that could explain it. But it turns out you're not even a cultivator," she said as she looked up at him with tears of frustration pooling in her eyes.

Zac coughed, a bit uncomfortable from the intensity of the stare. To avoid it he walked around to her back and placed his hand on her shoulder. She immediately tensed up and shot a glare at him in response.

"I have the Dao of Trees, and it has healing properties. It will speed up the process with absorbing the pill," he explained as he infused the Dao into her through his hand.

After feeling that nothing was amiss with the energies she relaxed again and refocused on healing. The silence felt a bit uncomfortable after her outburst so he started to talk about what came to his mind.

"When the integration happened I was camping with my girlfriend and three others, but it turned out all four of them were cultivators. The patch of forest we were in got moved, placing me alone on a remote island together with an Incursion. That Incursion was both a curse and blessing. It made my life a living hell, but closing it also gave me a bunch of advantages," Zac explained as he kept infusing her with the Dao of Trees.

"You singlehandedly closed an incursion?" she asked with shock and couldn't help to glance back at him.

"Well, after their leaders were dead the rest decided to leave," Zac said with a shrug, not bothering to explain the details.

Thea thoughtfully looked down, before once again closing her eyes to focus on recuperation. Zac helped speed up the healing process for roughly ten minutes before she opened her eyes again.

"...Thank you. For saving me," she said with some difficulty on her face before she got to her feet with some effort. "Ok, let's go."

"What?" Zac said with confusion.

"I'll have to inconvenience you for a bit while I heal," she said as matter of fact.

Zac mutely stared at her, his eyes not able to stop darting toward the palace a couple of times. Bringing a seriously wounded person along would greatly impact his gathering speed. There was also the issue that he might have to bear the blunt of the defensive arrays activating twice.

Thea clearly understood what he was thinking about since a sharp aura started to radiate out from her.

"You're thinking I'll be a nuisance," she said with some anger building. "I might be hurt but I was still able to finish off all the soldiers you missed. Besides, I have many useful skills."

"I mean you almost died just now. Perhaps going back to recuperate might be a better idea?" Zac hesitantly said. "Earth is full of opportunities and strong enemies to fight as well. Going back like this isn't the worst."

"And miss out on the free levels and titles?" she said, her anger reaching a crescendo. "Fine, you don't need to waste your precious time, just go on ahead without me."

"All right, all right," Zac sighed. "Let's just go. There's a hidden garden in the back of that palace. I think it might contain aged Spiritual Herbs. We might find something that will help heal you faster as well."

Thea's eyes lit up at the mention of Spiritual Herbs, and Zac could understand the reaction. Even though the System was flooding Earth with Cosmic Energy there were very few proper herbs still around. Furthermore, those that were growing were still extremely young and not too potent. It was one of the areas that Earth was lacking the most at the moment.

Since they were done here Zac started walking toward the palace, but after some hesitation he ran back and brought the identifiable corpses as well. At first he planned to leave them as a warning that this mountain was occupied in case anyone else arrived, but it might actually backfire and attract one of the stronger Medhin royals.

Since he was accompanied by Thea who was still in very bad shape even after eating a top grade pill he had to lower his speed, giving Zac the opportunity to ask some questions.

"So you know that I fight with axes. I'm not really good at things other than hitting things and getting hit," he said, eliciting a small smile from his new companion. "What kind of class do you have?"

Thea hesitated for a bit before answering.

"I guess you could say my class is a mix of a ranger and assassin. I mainly focus on battle as well, but I have some investigative skills," she said.

Zac nodded, not being too surprised. He and Ogras already suspected she was some sort of assassin class after she managed to cut the demon's throat without either of the two really seeing what happened.

"Stay close to me when we enter the palace, the arrays will probably be pretty dangerous," Zac said as he activated his defensive skill preemptively.

"I don't need you to protect me," she replied with a huff, but she still moved slightly closer as they approached the entrance.

As soon as Zac pushed open the door he was met with a wall of earthy smells from a wide variety of herbs and fauna. It felt as though every pore in his body was revitalized just from breathing, and his eyes lit up in excitement. There were good things in this palace for sure.

He was about to step inside to test the waters, but a hand grabbed his arm.

"What are you doing? Are you just entering?" Thea asked like she was looking at a fool.

"Well, yeah? What's your idea?" Zac asked.

He'd already ascertained that it wasn't possible to test the arrays with corpses, and he didn't believe Thea was an array expert.

"Just wait for a second," she said as her eyes closed.

The next moment a chromatic field appeared in front of them. Zac looked over to Thea with confusion and noted she had paled a bit.

“It’s a poison array. Breathing isn’t necessary to get poisoned, it will be able to enter through our pores,” she said with a frown.

Zac glanced over with surprise. It seemed she had a really handy skill for scouting things out. But since he knew it was a poison array he wasn’t too worried. He took out a vial of black pills whose smell made his nose-hair curl up.

“What the hell? Is that feces?” Thea said with wide eyes, taking a few steps away.

Zac only shook his head and swallowed one of the pills with a grimace.