

The Fall 231

Chapter 231: Rooting out Problems

"This had better work," Ogras grunted in annoyance. "This god damn array almost cleaned me bare."

"Well, it was you who decided to buy through the mercantile system rather than wait for Lord Atwood to return," Calrin responded, not able to hide his glee.

In front of them was a huge table wrought some crystal, and its surface was covered in dense fractals. Oddly enough each of the legs had sharpened ends, and all four of them were currently embedded into the ground. They were in a secluded cave right in the middle of the island, and this place had also become the headquarters of their operation.

Ogras only glared at the little twerp for a bit bit, thinking of methods he could have revenge without getting caught. He just knew that the little shit had added a substantial premium to the tools required when he saw the hurry that Ogras was in. But he could only swallow his ire for now, and he instead took out a crystal from his sleeve and put it to his mouth.

"Are you ready?" Ogras asked into the crystal.

"... Ready," a sullen voice responded from the other side.

"Come now, don't be like that. I'm sure that Zac will warm up if he heard you protected his sister," Ogras snorted.

Alea had been a complete drag the past weeks, drifting about like a brooding ghost. That man kept throwing annoying problems at him just to go on exciting adventures. Now Ogras was supposed to be some sort of marriage counselor as well? Well, at least he would get an adventure of his own if this all worked out, and he could leave all this crap behind.

The plan had taken a week of intense research and another week of putting everything together. The whole island now had over fifty minor teleportation arrays hidden all over. He would be able to appear almost anywhere on the island at moment's notice, they only needed to start up the main array in front of them to start the operation.

He had racked his brain for days to come up with another way to spot the shapeshifters. Those bastards were the only thing that blocked him from being able to enter the Mystic Realm now, and he couldn't wait to rip them apart. Ogras had even bought over twenty information missives from Calrin until he finally found a plan that had a decent chance to work.

Thoughts of just sneaking inside the Mystic Realm had crossed his mind tens of times, but in the end he forcibly pushed down those impulses. If Zac found out he shirked his duties while he was away he could forget about getting his hand on the inheritance, which was a surefire power-up for him compared to the unknown of the Mystic Realm.

Besides, he knew who would be the main targets of an assassination in case that both he and Zac were gone from the island simultaneously, and he didn't want to see the sister get herself killed. He had spent most of his time shadowing MacKenzie Atwood since Zac left on the hunt, and he had to admit she was an interesting person.

She was a contradiction personified. He had never met someone with such precise control of Cosmic Energy, her precision and reaction time were unparalleled. With such god-given talents she would be welcomed as an elite at almost any sect.

Attributes could be solved by various means, but supreme talent was far harder to come by. But at the same time he had seen her fall over while standing still twice, and he'd lost count of how many times she'd dropped things by just fumbling them. How could such a skilled person be so clumsy?

He had even gone so far as to ask around about her past, and it turned out that while the clumsiness was something she'd always had, the stellar control seemed to be something new. Perhaps her talent was always latent, just waiting to explode when this world got integrated. But he had bigger fish to fry than to figure out that mystery.

The solution to his problems that he finally found was an array called [E-Grade Origin Array]. It was an array that showed unique energy signatures of all people within its reach, and the signature depended on the origin of the person.

That meant that the demons would have pretty similar signatures, just like the humans and ishiate would have similar signatures within their cohorts. He had already silently escorted the few Zhix that were stationed in Port Atwood away so that they wouldn't add confusion to the results. That left the shapeshifters who should have their own unique signatures.

Normally this plan wouldn't work since the capitals of the multi-verse were melting pots of people with all kinds of origins. Besides, higher grade concealment skills would be able to change even the signatures they emitted, rendering the array useless. Even worse, everyone would notice it being activated since it shot out a not-so-discrete pulse.

Using such an array was akin to using inspection skills on everyone in a town, and was considered to be extremely rude and overbearing. If you were unlucky some hidden powerhouse might stay in the city, and he or she might take offense to being exposed like that. All this made the Origin Array mostly useless, and it wasn't one of the better-known arrays.

But the current situation of Port Atwood created the possibility of his plan working. First of all the population was extremely homogenous. Secondly, the shapeshifters were only F-Grade, meaning that they didn't possess access to skills strong enough to hide from the array.

Ogras placed ten E-Grade crystals in the core of the array, and it was with great relief he saw it hum into life. The tabletop in front of them changed, and soon it displayed the whole island. The next moment a pulse was emitted from the core beneath the table, and it quickly spread out to cover the whole island.

Azh'Rodum was the first town to get covered, and the map was quickly getting filled with similar red lights. A few blue lights also started shimmering, and Ogras guessed those were the humans that lived in Azh'Rodum as miners. The pulse kept expanding outward until they reached the array flags that were planted in the ocean roughly a hundred meters away from the shore. It had been a pain in the ass to put all those things into place.

Ogras had been forced to grapple with everything from enormous fish to oversized lizard-things that lived on the western shores of the island. MacKenzie had called them crocodiles, though they apparently weren't as large before this world got integrated.

Finally, they spotted lights that seemed out of place – three golden dots huddled together a few hours travel away from Port Atwood. They might be Ishiate that might have wandered off, but Ogras' guts told him otherwise.

"This thing consumes huge amounts of money, we can't keep it activated forever. Tell me if you see them move or if new ones crop up," Ogras said, and the next second stepped on the teleporter.

The next moment he appeared in the array closest to the signatures, and he immediately melded with the shadows as he rushed toward the shapeshifters with all speed he could muster.

"Two more at number 23, not moving," the voice of the Sky Gnome reached him through the crystal.

Ogras only grunted in confirmation as he kept moving forward. He had hoped there would only be the one, but there were already five signatures on the map. With the help of his late-stage Seed he was like a ghost as he pushed through the forest.

This was also the first real battle since he was freed from the restrictions of the system, and his Dexterity was completely unlocked, now sitting at over 400. His Wisdom and Intelligence weren't as high as he would have liked still, but he hoped that he would be able to bridge those gaps with his three trials before attempting to evolve again.

He finally reached the spot the map indicated, and immediately activated his ocular skill. For a while, he couldn't notice anything out of place, but he suddenly looked at a tree that had a suspicious lack of cosmic energy. He immediately took out his spear, and with one swift move crushed the tree into splinters.

A small hole made itself shown, and Ogras unhesitantly turned into shadows again as he dropped down inside. Three extremely startled humans sat huddled in a room of roughly thirty square meters. The floors and walls were pressed mud, and it was clear that they had dug the room out of the ground itself.

"Hey, what are you-" one of the men said, but he didn't get further before his throat was pierced with a stab from Ogras' spear.

The other two men realized there would be no subterfuge and immediately unleashed waves of golden flames in the cramped room. A ring on Ogras' finger lit up and a shield blocked out all the flames as he stabbed outward with this spear twice more.

A few seconds later the flames had died down, leaving only three somewhat charred corpses. Ogras gathered anything that had survived the fire into his Cosmos Sack before he opened the town shop menu and bought another small teleportation array.

"3 Down, any updates?"

"23 targets," a slightly helpless voice echoed back from the other side, and Ogras groaned in exasperation.

"Who are closest to the settlements?"

"Teleporter 33, twenty-five miles to the west," Calrin quickly responded.

Ogras kept moving from hideout to hideout, and it was as though the god of death had descended upon the island. There was no talk, no negotiation, no prisoners. Every cultist he found was ripped to shreds the moment he found them since he didn't want to risk one of them escaping again like the slippery one he failed to kill last time.

"A target is moving toward the academy," Calrin suddenly said with some worry through the crystal.

Some worry filled Ogras' heart upon hearing that. That was where Alea and MacKenzie were currently staying. He unhesitantly bought another array and jumped into it the moment it was stabilized. He immediately rushed toward the house where the two were hiding and found the Poison Mistress sitting outside keeping an eye of the surroundings.

She seemed surprised to see him and immediately ran over toward him as she kept looking around for any hidden threats.

"Are they coming?" Alea asked with some worry as her brows furrowed.

Ogras didn't answer, and instead immediately skewered her heart with his lance. At the same time, dozens of shadowy spears gored her body from every angle. Blood flowed like a fountain, and she slumped over with shocked eyes.

"How..?" she coughed, but the next moment she lifelessly fell over.

The next moment the door opened and both Alea and MacKenzie looked out of the house. The moment they saw Ogras they immediately swallowed a piece of Springroot. Ogras looked down at the copy of his general with a sneer.

"You're years too early to try a trick like that on me," Ogras muttered in disdain.

He searched the body and found another of those ghastly knives that even were enough to kill that human cockroach of a teammate. Ogras' heart couldn't help tightening upon seeing it since it showed just how close to death he had been.

The last shapeshifter had likely tried to lure him over and quickly kill him with the dagger. If he also managed to kill Alea afterward he would be able to run essentially rampant in the town. Ilvere was the strongest fighter apart from them, but his skill-set was not suited to deal with assassins.

"Good work," a voice said, and Ogras turned over to see MacKenzie walk over with a water bottle.

"Do you have anything stronger?" he muttered, but in the end accepted the bottle anyway.

"That stuff is not good for you," Kenzie said with the voice of someone having repeated herself innumerable times.

Alea looked at the two with a slight frown, before snorting and walking away, pointedly ignoring the mauled copy of herself on the ground. Ogras shot her a glance and shook his head with a sigh. She was likely leaving to keep watching that tree up in the mountains. That left himself and MacKenzie alone in the small courtyard, silently watching over the sunset.

"So when are you leaving?" Kenzie suddenly asked.

"We'll do a sweep again tomorrow, and if all is clear I will leave immediately after," Ogras answered. "I don't know how long it will take inside, but I want to be back before your brother returns."

"I've heard those places can be pretty crazy," Kenzie muttered, looking over at him with a steady stare. "Stay safe."

"I will."