

## The Fall 233

### Chapter 233: Falling

Zac sighed and looked over at Thea who already held her Token ready in hand. Their gambit had failed, and now it looked like they had thoroughly pissed off their enemy. Leaving seemed to be their only solution.

However, inside Zac's heart there was a staunch unwillingness to crush the token, even if things looked extremely bleak. It was as though he felt that something would change inside him if he fled like this. He was trying to gain enough power to protect Port Atwood and all his family, and the title from the hunt was one of the few available upgrades for him at the moment.

"Shit, it hurts," Inevitability growled as torrential amounts of energy gathered above it. "I wasn't going to kill you, but I'll just have to apologize to that guy. Fulcrums can be changed."

The next moment they were beset by hundreds of chains shooting toward them like homing missiles, each of them carrying enough power to seriously wound them. Zac quickly erected his upgraded [Nature's Barrier] and placed them as far from his body as possible to intercept the incoming attacks as he placed himself in front of Thea.

"I'll figure something out, I'll help delay if you want to crush the token," Zac quickly muttered as he faced Inevitability.

But he was shaken when he saw the first chain simply rip straight through the emerald leaf without being impeded overly much. It contained a new force that the chains didn't have before, and it felt extremely powerful.

Zac couldn't be sure, but he had a feeling that it was an upgraded or fused Dao Seed that empowered the chains to this degree. He had only been thinking of the huge attribute bonuses such a thing would bring, but the battle power it provided was nothing short of horrifying as well.

The closest chain flew straight toward Zac who only had time to lift his arm in defense. A loud crack could be heard and Zac felt a blinding pain as his arm was broken from the tremendous impact.

Zac felt some hopelessness when he saw the innumerable chains following close behind. There was no way he could survive long enough for him to crush the token and last the seconds until he was teleported. He didn't even have any way to help Thea out for long enough for her to escape.

But the next moment he was lifted from his feet, and his eyes widened as he was suddenly falling down the chasm. Thea was right next to him, holding his robe by the neck with a determined expression.

However, Inevitability's attack didn't stop there as the incoming chains followed them down the chasm, descending even faster than they were falling. Zac prayed this gambit would be enough as he took out his Token.

But the next moment an intense mental shock slammed into his mind, and [Mental Fortress] wasn't enough to completely stop it. It felt like his soul was getting shredded to pieces, making him spasm and drop the token.

“No reprieve for you,” he heard echoing down from above, and Zac looked up to see the sneering face of Inevitability standing up at the ledge.

He did what he could with his defenses, but his desperation grew as he was getting pelted by one attack after another as they kept falling. His vision started to get blurry, but suddenly a blinding light lit up next to him as a similarly wounded Thea shone like a goddess.

But Zac didn’t have a chance to see what she did as a fractal chain slammed straight into his head knocking him unconscious.

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Zac woke up with a cough, and it took quite a while to orient himself. At first, he thought Darkness had descended once again while he was out, but to his relief he found that wasn’t the case as he saw the sun far up in the sky.

He was at the bottom of the chasm in a crater he suspected was of his own making. The area was almost completely shrouded in darkness because even if the Sun shone up in the sky, most of the light didn’t reach the bottom of the extremely deep crack he found himself in.

Every part of him hurt, and he even had a couple of broken bones. But the clearest indicator he’d barely survived the fall was that he’d turned into his Draugr form.

He guessed that the fall had essentially killed him, and his Core turned him into an undead once again. The first thing he did after orienting himself, even before taking a pill, was to open up the ladders. He scoured them over and to his relief saw that Thea’s name was still there.

He knew she hadn’t tried to kill him when she had grabbed him and jumped down the cliff. He knew he was all out of options in that battle. He had already used everything he got but it wasn’t enough.

That thing was truly a monster. Zac couldn’t even kill it when it went easy on them, but after it imbued its attack with an evolved Dao he was almost helpless against it. Perhaps he would need such a Dao of his own before he could compete with it.

Jumping down was a last-ditch attempt to survive, but he didn’t really understand what happened afterward. That final attack had knocked him unconscious, and the last thing he remembered was Thea lighting up like a beacon.

At first, he thought she had used some defensive treasure to survive, but after looking around he couldn’t find her anywhere, not even any hint of her having fallen down. The fact that she was still on the ladder meant that she hadn’t teleported out though, leaving him even more confused.

Since he couldn’t find her he sat down and took out one of the top tier healing pills and a couple of miasma stones to absorb. He didn’t move for a full hour, fully focusing on recuperating his body. The fall wasn’t the only thing that had hurt him, the fight that preceded it had taken a toll as well.

Meeting one of the true Dominators had been a sobering wake-up call. With his dual classes and plethora of titles he thought that even if he might not be quite as strong, the difference shouldn’t be too large.

But reality had proven different. He had a feeling that the only reason that he still was still alive was that the Dominator wasn't trying to kill him in the beginning for some reason. It rather felt that he was being toyed with. He had even tried to take advantage of that fact to mount a sneak attack with the help of Hatchetman's Rage, but even that had failed spectacularly. The power of that monstrous Dominator was just insurmountable for the current him.

That begged the question as to why there hadn't been a single report of their activities thus far. If they wanted to they should have no problem destroying any incursion, reaping the benefits. Since they didn't shy away from Cosmic Energy like their brethren they shouldn't have an aversion to collect titles that could help them get even stronger.

The only clue that he gained from the fight was the mention of a plan, and his being a fulcrum of it somehow. His guess was that they were biding their time for whatever Void's Disciple had planned.

Zac couldn't help but release a tired sigh as he went over his hurt body. Strong enemies just kept popping up. First, it was the mysterious Redeemer, then the Dominators who were stronger than expected and who were also working on some grand plan that appeared to impact the whole world.

In any case, there wasn't much he could do about it where he was currently stuck. Perhaps Ibtep could be of assistance in figuring out the situation when he got back. He wouldn't waste his time with this in the middle of the hunt, and since he was mostly healed after an hour he stood up with a groan.

That thought brought up a new question. Zac got an ominous feeling as he checked his Cosmos Sack. But his fears were true; he had lost his token. The mental attack from Inevitability had made him lose his grip on the token as he fell down, and even after looking around for close to an hour he couldn't find it anywhere.

That meant he had lost his opportunity to escape this hunt early. He would either stay the whole duration or die. A few of his ribs were still cracked, but he didn't want to stay here. However, the question was where the hell he should go. He could either try to climb up the cliff again or keep exploring this hidden rift.

But after a few more minutes he realized he didn't actually have much of an option. The walls were just insanely hard, and he couldn't cut footholds even with the help of [Verun's Bite]. And since he didn't possess Thea's skills of finding a purchase from the smallest space he just had no way to get back up to the mountains.

Worse yet he realized he might be in trouble. The reason that the stones were hard was likely that they had been infused with the odd darkness that spanned this fallen sect. There was an unmistakable aura in the very rocks itself all around him.

He was starting to form a hypothesis as he looked around. There were small cracks at various places along the stone, and these cracks had a far higher amount of the sinister aura. Whatever the darkness was it might originate from this very ravine and other ones like it all along the area, and the true source of the darkness seeped out from those cracks during the night.

He still had no idea just what the darkness was. It could be described as a mental poison that made both beasts and people turn insane. The last times he wasn't in any danger, staying hidden far from the

specters feeding ground. But what would happen if darkness descended while he stood right at the source?

The prospect was enough to make Zac's hair stand on end, and his urgency to escape the chasm increased many times over. At least it was still mid-day, and he had ample time to get out of here before the night came.

It seemed random which days the darkness descended, but it invariably happened in the deep of the night. That meant Zac had almost 12 hours to get out before he was in any danger of getting caught in the middle of an endless onslaught of endless specters.

So Zac started to walk along the rift in order to find any way to get back up in the end. At first, he planned on randomly choosing his path, but he soon changed his mind and headed north.

The reason was that he felt a small gust of wind coming from that direction, which might mean that there was a passage in that direction that could let him leave this creepy place. Urgency pushed his tired body forward, and he ignored his body's protests as he kept a rapid pace.

However, the ravine felt almost endless as he walked for hours. The gust of wind he felt was clearly just some wayward wind from the ground floor. The only thing of note he'd found during his walk was a couple of corpses.

He was no expert in judging the cause of death, especially when a couple of the corpses were just meat paste, but he believed that not all bodies had died due to the fall. Some were cleanly beheaded or had other wounds, making Zac believe that the bodies had been dumped by their killers.

There was no evidence though that anyone had been alive down in the crevasse, and Zac wasn't surprised. The height of the fall was over a thousand meters, and even he with close to 400 Endurance would have died from the fall if it wasn't for his Core giving him another go at life.

Suddenly it got darker and Zac frowned as he looked up. He was relieved to see that it actually didn't suddenly become night, but rather that the ravine closed up by the ground floor. However, the subterranean level continued on, and Zac's eyes widened when he saw what was up ahead.

There were actually signs of there being human activity in front of him.

Not now in regards to the hunt, but once upon a time. There was a square made with pitch-black cobblestones that spanned roughly two hundred meters across.

Even though Zac initially felt elated that he might find a way out of here, he quickly got a sinking feeling as he looked at the place. He had thought that since there was development down here there might also be a path up, but he started to believe that might not be the case.

The only thing on the square was a huge cracked obelisk that was completely covered in fractals. The obelisk reached over fifty meters in height, and each side was over five meters across. At the foot of the obelisk in the direction of Zac there were two chains attached that radiated an otherworldly suppression and weight.

But the chains were cracked and held nothing at their other end. This was some sort of prison, but the prisoner was nowhere in sight.

