

The Fall 236

Chapter 236: Anzonil

Between the 17th and 18th marks that he carved there was a convergence of energy flows that could be somewhat discerned if you watched it for about 20 minutes. That meant there hopefully was a weak spot in the array there, and Zac's best bet in getting out.

Swapping over to his human form would increase his attack power, but Zac still chose to try it out in his undead form first. He wanted to grind his Undead class a bit and it was far harder to transform into a Draugr than it was to turn back into a human.

Zac took a few steadying breaths before he infused his arm with as much miasmic energy it could bear, and with a roar slammed his Dao-infused axe right into the floor right at the intersection of energies he had spotted.

Suddenly it almost felt like he was drunk as he was seeing double. Two realities were superimposed on each other, and the endless hallway he'd been stuck in for a week was just one of them. The other one stopped just ten meters away from him with an intricately carved door.

Zac didn't hesitate and pushed more miasma into his legs as he leaped toward the gate before the entrapment array could stabilize again. He slammed into the gate with enough force to knock the breath out of him, but he wasn't angry in the slightest.

He had finally escaped his entrapment. Zac looked back toward the other end of the hallway, and he spotted the door leading out to the square with the obelisk a few hundred meters away. But just a second later the door disappeared, being replaced once more with the endless hallway.

His swing hadn't been enough to destroy the array, but it had been enough cause some chaos at the endpoint, allowing him to exit it. Zac was already itching with impatience from a week of inactivity, and he couldn't help opening the ladder in to check the status, and he couldn't help being shocked by what he saw.

He had been kicked down all the way to the 11th spot on the Gatherer ladder, which was somewhat of a surprise to him. While it was true he'd lost a whole week down in this tunnel, he still only really had Emperor Nenotheop to compete with earlier. That ten people had managed to pass the huge amount of wealth he'd accumulated was quite shocking.

A few of the names weren't surprising, such as Starlight, Beruv Ylvas and another of the Medhin powerhouses. But he was somewhat happy to see that Thea had kept going as well, being at the 6th spot. Even more surprising was the appearance of Thomas Fisher in the 8th position.

Zac had only kept his eye on the top positions of the ladder, and he was sure that he hadn't seen Thomas in the top 100 of either list before. For him to suddenly spring up to the 8th position could only be explained with him getting the help of the whole organization.

It also proved that Thomas was more than just one of the many leaders of the New World Government. Between the fact that he was chosen to experiment with holding on to massive amounts of wealth, he was also the one they chose to hold onto the wealth of the hunt.

Zac had a generally positive opinion of Thomas, though it was marred by the various insidious things he had found out about the government. It was also somewhat a relief that the man was still human since the shapeshifters shouldn't be able to get here.

But the truly shocking change was on the Hunter ladder, with him being relegated down to the 443rd position. Before he got fell down into the chasm he was at the 8th position, with the Emperor, the Dominators and a few more above him.

That loss in positions was huge, and it made Zac realize that something must have changed on the surface. He suspected that there must have been something like beast hordes completely flooding the mountains as a result of the System making the area of the hunt smaller over time.

There was no way to gain that many points by only hunting cultivators since there were simply not enough of them to go around. It would also explain why he only lost 10 spots in one ladder, but over four hundred in the other. The huge loss in positions only served to make him even more impatient, and it was without hesitation he pushed open the door.

This was already the 20th day of the hunt, and Zac only had ten days to catch up to those above. However, he did take out the thick shield he got from Thea's bodyguard before stepping inside. He didn't have access to the swirling leaves of [Nature's Barrier], so he would have to make do with a normal tool for protection.

The room he entered was massive, and it almost felt like he entered a grand cathedral carved into the mountain. The roof was over fifty meters above him and held up by massive pillars covered in both reliefs and fractals. Even the walls and the ceiling was the same, both being covered with marvelous pieces of art

It the grandeur felt a bit reminiscent of the Towers of Myriad Dao back on his island, but there was more substance to this place. Zac couldn't help being awed as he slowly walked inside, his eyes drifting to the beautiful engravings.

Zac immediately started formulating ideas of how to somehow swipe this whole place clean. Everything from the small statues placed in various alcoves to the huge pillars supporting the vaulted ceiling felt like a treasure, and Zac didn't want to leave it behind.

But he suddenly stopped in his tracks when his eyes moved to a podium on the other end of the room because he finally realized that he wasn't alone. There was a humanoid sitting in a meditating position on the podium as four braziers lazily burned around him.

The looked mostly human, though he had a third eye in his forehead forming a vertical slit. He had a long white beard, and it was clear that he was elderly from his appearance. Worse yet, he had already spotted Zac and was looking at him with steady eyes.

"Welcome young... Draugr? Huh? An undead?" the man slowly said with a powerful voice that felt full of wisdom.

Zac sensed no malice from the old man, and it wasn't like he had many other places to go, so he walked closer to the old man. As Zac got closer he realized that there was not a single ripple of power coming from him, making him wonder just who he was and how he got here.

It was even odder that there was simply no vitality around the old man. When he was in his undead form he could even see the life in a stalk of grass, but the man in front of him might as well not exist going by the metric of life force.

There were two possibilities as Zac saw it. The old man might be a spectral being such as the things in the darkness since they shouldn't possess any vitality either. The other possibility was that the old man was just an illusion or a projection without any power.

"Hello, I am Zac. Are you a part of the hunt as well?" Zac hesitantly asked after he stopped ten meters away from the platform on which the old man sat.

He wouldn't get any closer than that though since there was no telling what sorts of protection was placed around the podium. He couldn't sense anything odd about it, but then again he had only gained the slightest of insight into discerning oddities in the energy flow.

"What hunt?" the man asked curiously.

Zac wasn't surprised by the answer, and him asking that was only a test. He had already seen that the man in front of him didn't possess a ladder position, meaning he wasn't part of the hunt. The fact that the old man didn't pretend to be one of the cultivators from earth was hopefully a good sign.

He hesitated for a bit before he explained the circumstances of the hunt, and of the fact that the people participating weren't from this world. The old man looked saddened by the news, and after Zac finished his explanation gave a deep sigh.

"Such is fate. Over fifty thousand years of struggle, only to be undone by one mistake. To think that we became a trial ground for young aspiring cultivators. At least our legacy will live on that way I suppose," the man said looking up at the ceiling.

"We? Are you part of the Eastern Trigram Sect?" Zac asked.

"I am Anzonil. I, or rather my original body, was once the supreme elder of the Eastern Trigram Sect. Of course, I am long dead along with my fellow sect members," the old man said with a slight shake of his head.

Zac's brows rose at that explanation.

"Um, sorry, how are you still here then? I know you are not undead," Zac couldn't help ask.

"I couldn't help being a bit selfish in the end. I cut off part of my soul and imbued it into the arrays of these hidden chambers. I did not want my eight thousand years of cultivation amount to nothing, so I left my imprint and my heritage here," Anzonil said as he looked down at Zac. "But who would have guessed that the one who came was an undead warrior rather than an Array Master. The Boundless Heavens truly have a sense of humor. I am not sure if what I've left behind would be of much use to you."

If Zac had a heartbeat in his undead form it would have sped up at the mention of a heritage. It indicated that he'd somehow found himself at the location of the inheritance of the supreme elder of the Eastern Trigram Sect. Whatever treasures were hidden here should be among the greatest of the whole Eastern Trigram Sect.

Supreme elders were usually the main powerhouses of a Sect. Zac initially thought that the Sect Leader was the strongest guy around, but that apparently wasn't the case. Being a Sect Leader was a highly administrative position, leaving little time for personal cultivation.

But the grand and supreme elders were the hidden forces of a sect, and they were generally in perpetual seclusion or traveling in disguise, working on breaking through their limits. They would only come out when the sect was facing extreme danger that the normal elders couldn't handle, and they were the main deterrence against attacks.

Most of the multiverse wasn't like earth. There were no ladders that showed who was alive and who died. A particularly strong elder might even be able to protect a sect thousands of years after their passing, since the outside world couldn't be sure whether they were dead or if they had made a breakthrough, becoming even more monstrous.

There was no way that such a person didn't have a few supreme treasures stowed away. But Zac frowned after realizing he might not get his hands on those treasures since he wasn't an Array Master. But Anzonil snorted when he saw the downcast face of Zac.

"Who would have thought that a lofty Draugr would be so hungry for this old man's small trinkets," he said with a smile. "Not to worry, there is a path to my treasure even for those who are not fated to walk the same path as me."

The next moment two doorways rose from the ground some distance away from them, and both teemed with power. The next moment the right of the two doorways shuddered and a shimmering screen appeared in it.

"Two pathways to my inheritance," Anzonil said after throwing a glance at the archways. "The left is a trial of Arrays. The trial taker must break through 10 increasingly difficult arrays to reach my treasures, and that is the path that is not fated with you."

Zac frowned at that explanation, but he slowly nodded.

"Don't worry, that is best for you as well. Your method of getting out of the entrapment array outside was admirable, but there is no way you'd pass further than the second array with that kind of brute force. You'd be stuck forever inside," the old man said.

"What about the second path?" Zac probed.

"The second path is a path of carnage. To reach my treasure you need to fight your way through a sea of monsters. This path is far more dangerous, but if you want my treasures without being proficient in arrays you'll have to take some risks," Anzonil explained.

Zac's eyes lit up since this was exactly what he was looking for; treasures and things to kill. But he still hesitated whether he should take on the trial rather than asking to be sent outside. If the enemies were the specters he would be in trouble since he wasn't able to kill them. And they were far beneath the mountains now, who knew how many of them were prowling these depths.

There was a limit of how long he could resist their onslaught if it was the same as during the first time darkness descended. But Zac didn't have the opportunity to voice his concerns as an unseen force suddenly lifted him into the air and threw him into the shimmering portal.

“Good luck young Draugr, prevail in the depths for this old man. Show me why they call yours the royal bloodline,” the elderly voice reached Zac's ears before his vision turned black.