

The Fall 238

Chapter 238: Mystic Structure

Ogras hesitantly looked around for a bit, unsure what to do next. This wasn't the direction of the Mystic Realm he'd expected. He had imagined either a wild environment where his skills were put to the test against an onslaught of beasts or an ancient ruin containing a Title-Awarding trial or something equally valuable.

But there was no danger and nothing to explore, only a forest and a wall. He tried climbing the wall to pass it, but he simply couldn't get up. It was completely sheer, giving him no purchase. He tried stabbing the wall with knives in order to climb, but they only left a scratch-mark that immediately disappeared.

He did manage to use his spear to impale the wall, but his weapon was almost immediately pushed out and the wall repaired itself in an instant. Ogras looked up at the shimmering fractals above, realizing that at least part of their purpose was to maintain the enclosure. Out of better options, he started walking along the wall, hoping to find anything different about it.

Ogras wasn't ready to head back just yet. He'd paid almost 50 million Nexus Coins to stabilize the rift for a week, and he refused to return empty-handed. He would rather spend a week to cut down these humongous trees and at least sell them as timber.

They didn't seem to be E-Grade trees, but at least they didn't seem to be mortal-graded since there was some spirituality in the huge things. And even if they were only F-Grade there was an enormous quantity, which would hopefully allow him to make a return on his investment.

But before he resigned to becoming a lumberjack he wanted to see if there was any exit in the wall. If someone created this area there should be a way to get in and out. Since he'd only spent an hour or so inside the Mystic Realm he had all the time in the world to check things out before he needed to get back.

The minutes passed as Ogras slogged along the wall, and his surroundings were so uniform that he started to wonder if he was stuck inside a loop of some illusion array. Half his field of view was the blank silver of the wall, and the other half was the lush green of the towering trees. The purple sky was barely visible through the thick canopy of the trees that stretched toward the wall.

But finally his stubbornness was rewarded, as he spotted a change in the wall in the distance. Ogras sped up with excitement, turning into a hazy blur as he melded with the shadows. Two minutes later he stood in front of a gate reaching roughly 6 meters into the air.

It was wrought of the same material as the wall itself and consisted of two doors. But there was no handle and no matter how hard he pushed or tried to separate the two doors he couldn't budge them even the slightest. Ogras even jammed his spear into the slit between the doors to use as a crowbar, but it was for nothing.

He clearly had no way to brute force this thing open, which left only one more thing to try. To the right side of the door roughly three meters up was something that looked a bit like the so-called Tablets that the humans of Earth had invented. Either that or a small TV, since it was somewhere in between the two in size.

Ogras stabbed his spear into the ground and leaped up to stand on top of the hilt to get a better view of the thing. The square tablet was roughly as large as his torso, but there were no lights or inscriptions on it, making it almost seem like a non-functional decoration.

But there was nothing else sticking out around the gate, so Ogras hesitantly touched the screen to 'wake it up' in case it worked like the human tablets. To his shock, it worked, and a row of unfamiliar scripts appeared on the screen. Ogras was elated, but next a voice appeared out of nowhere, making Ogras quickly look around.

[Signature not recognized.]

Ogras brows rose in alarm, and he immediately pushed away from the door, gripping his spear as he looked around. Was there a tool spirit controlling this place? If so he might just have made a huge blunder and drawn its attention. It seemed he had been recognized as an intruder.

[Caretaker Signature added. Tier-3 Access Added.]

"Caretaker?" Ogras muttered in confusion. "Hello, who's there?"

However, there was no response to his question, only silence. The screen up in the air had also dimmed down, returning to its passive state. Ogras hesitated what to do. Go back and get reinforcements or keep trying to open the door? Since this seemed like something technological in nature it was perhaps a better idea to go and get a few humans and a couple of craftsmen.

But curiosity pushed him forward, and he once again approached the door. But this time the doors soundlessly slid open, giving access to a large room on the other side. Ogras brows furrowed in confusion, and he hesitated whether he should go inside.

The voice said that his signature first wasn't recognized, then it added a caretaker. Had the Tool Spirit for the door mistaken him for someone in charge of tending the trees? And what was Tier-3 Access? Would it let him return again if he walked inside the doorway and it closed shut?

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained," Ogras muttered as he tightened his grip on his spear, heading inside the door. "Worst case scenario I will have to wait for Zac to come and smash through this thing."

The other side of the wall didn't lead to the outdoors, but he rather found himself inside a large room that seemed to be used for storage. Both the walls and roof were made of the silver metal as well, and there wasn't much else of note inside. The same type of fractals also ran all across the upper walls as well, making a loop around the room.

The room itself was lit with crystals, indicating energy arrays were running through the walls. The crystals wouldn't be able to work by themselves since there were clear signs no one had been here for a very long time. There were also a few crates that were falling apart in one corner, shrunken nuts having spilled out of them across the floor.

Ogras guessed the nuts were used to plant those huge trees outside, but the seeds seemed to have dried out long ago, and he doubted whether they would be able to be planted any more. Still, he had ample space in his Cosmos Sack so he put the crates inside as he looked around.

There was also a table and a chair, both made out of metal. The size of them were much too large for Ogras, just like the gate. Judging by how that tablet was placed and the size of the furniture Ogras estimated the creators of this place to reach roughly 4 to 5 meters into the air.

Not many species were that large, at least not amongst the more populous races. There were a few golem, demon, and beastmen species that were this tall, but Ogras saw nothing that indicated any specific species inside this thing.

On the other side of the room was another gate much like the one he just passed through. But before he headed over he first went back to the original gate, and he was relieved to see that it noiselessly slid open upon his approach.

Ogras headed over to the other side, and this one also opened without having to touch the tablet up in the air. An enormous corridor stood on the other side, and Ogras hesitantly walked outside. The corridor was made from the same material as well, and Ogras started to feel they must have dismantled a whole mountain to get this much material.

A few tubes ran along the roof in the corridor, and the whole thing reminded Ogras of those Technomancer movies that he had watched when he was free. They had taken place in societies where there was no Cosmic Energy, but technology had reached far beyond Earth's current capabilities, and they even explored the multiverse.

But there were also signs that this was not a technocrat stronghold. The corridor was illuminated with crystals rather than electrical lamps, and Ogras was pretty sure that the Technomancers did not use fractals for their bases. They relied on the so-called Dao of Technology, and that concept did not use fractals or inscriptions.

The design made him rather veer toward some sort of artificial beings, such as the Creators or another golemoid race. They often liked this type of lifeless interior, whereas Demons or Beastkin favored more nature in their surroundings.

Ogras was once again shocked by the sheer size of the complex he found himself inside. Had the whole mystic realm been turned into some sort of base? He found himself walking for hours, and he had found six more gardens, each of them planted with the same trees.

It was also quickly becoming clear that the Cosmic Energy had somehow been concentrated into these gardens since the energy outside could at best be the equivalent of a Low-Tiered E-Grade planet. But why use all the energy in the Mystic realm for some trees?

But apart from that, there was nothing of note. Most of the corridors were empty, creating a network that spanned around these huge circular areas with the trees. He had found a few rooms that seemed to be barracks, with rows of huge bunk beds lined up.

But there were no sign of them having been inhabited since there was no remains or signs of use. There was just a thick layer of dust on the mattresses, while the walls and floor were spotless. Ogras had a feeling it had something to do with the inscriptions running along the walls. They seemed to perform a variety of maintenance functions, from repairs to self-cleaning, much like the arrays on equipment.

But finally, he reached a gate that was different from the others. It looked the same, but it did not automatically open like those he'd passed before. Ogras leaped up and grabbed hold of the tablet, and with a buzz it lit up.

[Tier-3 Access Signature. Access granted]

It was the same voice as before, and the next moment the gate slowly slid open. Ogras noted with some interest that this one was far thicker than the others, reaching almost a meter in thickness. But his attention was quickly drawn to the outside because it almost felt like he'd entered a different world.

There was the same type of corridors as before, but these ones were caked in grime and what Ogras could only assume was dried blood. There were signs of battle everywhere, with ruined pipes and scarred walls. Only a few illuminating crystals still worked, and the light they gave off was far weaker compared to the corridors earlier.

Ogras eyes quickly turned to the fractals up in the air, but he noted that they didn't give off any light or energy as they did in the corridors he had passed earlier. Were the Cosmic Energy network ruined in this part of the structure? And what kind of battle had taken place here? And why was the earlier section unaffected by whatever had happened here?

The signs of battle was a clear indicator that this place was inhabited, or at least had been not too long ago. Ogras quickly shrouded himself in shadows as he started proceeding along the wall after making sure he could enter the thicker gate again.

As he walked there were signs of disrepair everywhere, and there were even signs of someone having stripped parts of the walls for materials. His eyes darted back and forth as he kept walking through the oppressive paths. They were as large as those before, but somehow they felt far more claustrophobic.

A sudden sound of metal striking metal echoed out in the distance, and Ogras pushed himself to the wall, completely blending with the darkness under a broken illumination crystal. As he kept listening he heard the sounds repeating, and he immediately realized it was the sound of battle. His heartbeat sped up in fear-mixed anticipation; he wasn't alone.

Since he couldn't sense any too strong energies from the direction of the ruckus he slowly crept forward, and he finally reached a shrouded corner that gave him a vantage of what was going on around the corner where the sounds came from.

Two warriors of different species were in a desperate fight for their lives. One of them was a human, and the other was of a beastkin origin, looking a bit like a werewolf. The sounds Ogras heard earlier had come from the clash between the wolfman's claws and the human's sword. Since they were stuck in the tunnel they couldn't completely maneuver as they wished, but they were clearly used to battle in this type of confined space.

They used both the walls and the roof as a foothold as they clashed over and over, each clash resulting in a shockwave that told Ogras that they were in either weak E-grade warriors or somewhat strong F-Grade warriors. Ogras was considering whether he should throw his hat into the ring when the wolf suddenly disappeared after being pushed back from a clash with the human's sword.

The next moment the beastkin was right in front of Ogras, and a searing pain erupted in his face. Ogras' face contorted in pain and anger, and the next moment the metallic mold on his arms cracked as a pitch-black hand reached for the werewolf. The werewolf quickly reacted and pushed away, but the hand extended beyond what was normal and gripped the throat of the wolf.

The sinister claws of the werewolf tried to cut the hand right off, but they powerlessly went straight through and the next moment a crunch echoed out through the tunnels as Ogras crushed the neck of his attacker. The eyes of the human who had stood by in the distance lit up when he saw his enemy die, but before he could speak up he puked a mouthful of blood.

A large shadow spear had impaled him from behind, and the human fearfully looked at Ogras as he walked over, his eyes glowing in the darkness. The black arm had lost its form, now only forming a shadowy haze that drifted by his side.

"I have some questions."