

The Fall 251

Chapter 251: Family Drama

Three men were kneeling on the ground of the large luxurious tent. They were shaking in fright, but not one of them dared to either move or speak up to break the suffocating silence.

“So none of you have found that man after three long days?” the middle-aged man on the throne said with a voice devoid of emotion as he stared down at his subjects.

He had a short beard that was perfectly trimmed, and his black hair was held back in a knot by a jade diadem that was covered in dense fractals. In fact, a casual glance would be enough to spot over ten treasures that would cause a storm of bloodshed if they were placed on the streets of Medhin. But of course no one would even dare dream of taking them from this man.

He was decked in a golden robe with large red fractals. Everything about him screamed of opulence, but no one would ever think the man was anything but a warrior. Part because of the large spear that was never further from him than arm’s reach, but mostly due to the suffocating power that naturally radiated from him.

Emperor Nenotheop was nothing like some of the extended family, wastrels who lived a life of luxury while barely contributing to the Grand Undertaking. The core of the family was a ruthless competition of resources and advantages, or at least it had been until the Grand Undertaking was finally coming to fruition.

Nenotheop had killed at eight of his siblings and cousins in his quest for the throne and imprisoned another 14. He was ruthless to others but more so toward himself. He pushed his forces hard, but he had been balancing on the edge of life and death since he was a child, all in order to push himself further on the path of cultivation.

Now that the world was finally flooded with both Cosmic Energy and fortuitous encounters he had exploded in power and had ransacked the whole empire for any benefit that could be seized.

“Three days. Hundreds of men,” Nenotheop continued with his even voice as he looked down on his three generals. “Yet the killer of my son eludes you. Do I need to make changes to my ranks?”

The three started shaking even worse since there was no such thing as a demotion, only decapitation, and substitution.

"Witness accounts clearly indicated that Repubat managed to grievously injure Beruv Ylvas before he fell, and we saw the direction he fled. Yet he is allowed to recuperate in peace, making us look like fools," Nenotheop continued, his massive aura causing the throne beneath him to creak from the pressure.

“Lord Emperor, please give us a bit more time,” the man in the middle pleaded without daring to raise his head. “We have found some clues and are pursuing them to the fullest. However, our resources were partly diverted to find this Zachary Atwood.”

Nenothep grunted in displeasure, but he had to admit that he was the one that gave that order just half a day ago. That otherworlder had been his greatest adversary for the treasures of this dead world, and he had once again been overtaken.

He had been shocked to find that this Zachary Atwood, or Super Brother-Man as the ladder called him, was a lone wolf without a support system. He himself had scoured summit after summit, but he also had thousands of soldiers to pick the mountains clean for him.

Yet this man had been stiff competition relying only on himself, and perhaps a handful of helpers. The only answer he could find was that Zachary Atwood possessed a supreme skillset for sniffing out grand treasures, likely combined with a very high Luck-attribute.

Less than four days remained of the hunt, and he couldn't solely rely on himself and his soldiers to accumulate more treasures. Even if he passed Zachary Atwood again he could lose his position at moment's notice. He needed to kill that man as well, even more than finding Repubat's killer.

"Perhaps I can help in that regard," a golden robed man said as he entered the tent, dragging a shackled woman with him.

Emperor Nenothep looked over at the person who entered his tent with mixed emotions. It was his fifth son, Vasidas Medhin. On one hand he felt pride that he had birthed such a genius, and the man was such a clear successor that he didn't have to worry about the future of his lineage. If the integration hadn't happened he would be a great source of joy.

But now there was also worry, and to certain extent jealousy, in his heart as he gazed at his successor. When The Great Redeemer arrived to their planet the Medhin family would be rewarded from their millennia of efforts and then relocated to their new home.

But there was also a chance to be taken as a disciple by the Great Lord himself, and that had been the goal of Nenothep since the moment he learned his planet was finally being integrated. But his son was simply too stellar and was quickly inching in on him even though he had five decades of a headstart on the road of cultivation.

That in of itself was a problem. Nenothep was already closing in on 80 years old even though he barely looked to be forty, whereas his son was only 28. While Nenothep would still be considered a child of the younger generation in the multiverse it was undeniable it was better to take in as young disciples as possible.

Would The Great Redeemer even look his way when there was another with at least the same proficiency but far younger? Some killing intent was hidden in his heart, but he still hadn't decided on his course of action.

It wasn't due to familial ties, but rather due to caution. Vasidas was no fool, but rather the opposite. He was definitely ready for a strike, and he was likely even planning an attack of his own. So they smiled and lived in harmony as they danced their dance of death.

This is why Nenothep was a bit suspicious about the motives of the young man, and his eyes turned toward the young woman who glared back at him with her piercing blue eyes.

“I still haven’t found the man who killed second brother, but I might have found a way to get to Zachary Atwood,” Vasidas said. “This is Thea Marshall, an offworlder who was seen traveling with Zachary Atwood for the first two weeks. Perhaps she would be useful in luring him out.”

Nenothep’s heartbeat couldn’t help speed up when he understood the opportunity that was in front of him. Zachary Atwood had been simply impossible to locate during the past weeks, but he obviously kept getting treasure after treasure while also killing thousands of cultivators and beasts.

But he hesitated as he looked at the captive. Gaining the first position on the Gatherer ladder would be a great win for Nenothep, but he held no delusions his son would help out of the goodness of his heart.

Just what was Vasidas planning this time?

Zac stretched a bit as he got up to his feet. Since both his body and mind were still hurt from the cavern earlier he opted to rest for a few hours once he had returned to the surface. As he waited for his body to heal his mind couldn’t help but going toward the Splinter of Oblivion in his mind.

It was still stuck in the separate space along with the miasmatic fractals, though that didn’t do much for lowering his stress. Even after asking Anzonil there were many unanswered questions, but he was forced to put them aside for now. The space seemed completely steady, and it was even to the point that he was barely able to see what was going on inside.

But he had other pressing concerns. He needed to figure out what to do for the last days. He was already top-dog on the gatherer ladder, and the top Title was as good as his as long as he didn’t get himself killed. But he still was far off his original goal for the hunter ladder.

He had only gained one more position during the past days, putting him in the 5th position. He had passed one of the E-Grade powerhouses from his final clash with the ghosts, but he was unsure how long he would be able to maintain that lead.

The two names in the lead were Inevitability and Harbinger, which wasn’t too surprising. The third was Nenothep Medhin, and the fourth spot was Vasidas Medhin. The Medhin royal who had disappeared and helped Zac gain a spot was Repubat Medhin.

Zac honestly had no confidence in being able to pass the two Dominators after having fought one of them, and outright killing them was out of the question. However, his eyes couldn’t help but toward the two Medhin royals.

Almost a month had passed since he saw the other world’s ladder, but at that time Nenothep Medhin was level 89, whereas Vasidas was at level 78. He couldn’t be completely sure, but he had some confidence in killing Vasidas, or at least surviving if he failed.

But at the same time he wasn’t sure if it was worth it. It didn’t matter if he improved his position to 4th spot on the Hunter ladder since the 4th to 10th positions gave the same rewards, 3 levels and 50 million nexus Coins.

He needed to either defeat pass not only the crown prince but also the emperor himself to get the 3rd reward spot and instead gain 5 levels. But he wasn't as confident against Emperor Nenothep. He couldn't be considered recently evolved, and that wasn't the only danger with those royals.

The real problem came with the War Arrays they seemed to possess. He could only imagine that the force that the emperor himself surrounded himself with would far surpass that of Tyrbat who he killed with Thea earlier.

There was also the issue of his token. Unfortunately, there was no function where it automatically returned after a while, so he still had no option to retreat if needed. So if he decided to assault the Medhin Royals his venues of retreat would be limited.

So assaulting the royals was a high-risk gambit with limited rewards. Certainly, they both possessed huge amounts of wealth. The Emperor had even more treasure than himself if he discounted the [Heart of Oblivion]. But what he had gained thus far already far surpassed what he had dreamed of, and he didn't want to get greedy.

He also didn't know if Inevitability was still after his head, so any large-scale activities might get the attention of the people he least wanted to meet.

In any case, he needed more information. He was pretty sure something had changed up here during his time in the tunnels, judging by the number of points others had gathered. Perhaps there would be some way for him to move up the ladder without having to duke it out with the Medhin Emperor.

The mountain he was dropped off on was one of the decorative mountains with engravings and a large pillar at the summit. However, now he had a feeling that these things were actually disguised components of the massive array running beneath the mountains.

Since there was nothing of interest on the mountain Zac started to make his way down the mountain. He kept his eyes peeled for any signs of cultivators or fighting as he descended, but the area seemed pretty quiet at the moment.

He had quickly noted that the stage had shrunk even further during his time below, and he was a bit too close to the edge for comfort. He hastened his steps as he rounded the mountain so that he'd descend in the direction of what seemed to be the core of the remaining hunting grounds.

But at least it didn't seem that the System would force everyone into a desperate melee at the end of the hunt. The area was still plenty large, and Zac didn't think he would be able to reach the other side even if he tried. Reaching the core shouldn't be a problem though if he skipped ascending the summits.

As he descended toward the valleys between the mountains he quickly realized his assumption from before was correct. The System must have unleashed hordes of beasts into the trial since the foot of the mountain was practically teeming with animals.

There had already been a lot of them at the start of the hunt, but now it was bedlam as packs of animals were fighting no matter where he turned his eyes. The forests were filled with a deafening cacophony of calls, to the point that Zac could barely hear him think.

A new way for him to not only gain a bunch of points but also work on his levels quickly made itself apparent. Why should he risk his life to fight some E-Grade monsters when millions of beasts were waiting to be turned into Nexus Coins and experience?

The hunting grounds had truly become a paradise to grind levels and points.