## Chapter 261: Catastrophic Losses

Zac sighed in relief when he saw that Billy was out of harm's way. Billy's attack was extremely impressive coming from someone in the F-Grade, but there were also clear drawbacks to it. He was mostly defenseless as he ran toward the shield, and if Zac hadn't protected him with all his might the giant would have died before even getting his attack to land. It also seemed to consume all of Billy's energy since he was completely spent after just one swing.

And while the attack was extremely strong it wasn't very quick. Both Zac and Ogras would have no problem to avoid it with their movement skills. But it was a perfect attack to destroy an immobile object, and Zac couldn't imagine the power Billy would be able to exhibit when he reached E-Grade. He only needed a good team that would be able to help him bring his monstrous strength to bear.

There was also the issue of his transformation and golden blood. Did Billy possess a bloodline, or had he attained a special constitution somehow? He had never heard of a skill changing the color of one's blood, and the change in Billy's appearance along with that immense aura seemed to be something greater than a skill.

But now was not the time to go over such things.

Waves of power radiated from Zac as he completely unleashed his aura. The five enormous fractal edges gained a silver sheen, having been infused with the Dao of Sharpness. But before he unleashed his carnage Zac threw a gaze at Nenothep, just in case he was preparing another of those monstrous long-ranged attacks.

The emperor looked completely enraged from the turns in the battle, and was relentlessly attacking the Berum trio. He almost looked like a god of war from the huge aura he emitted, and a large fractal shone in the air behind him. It seemed to be one of his skills rather than an effect of the War Arrays, and it provided the emperor with an odd but deadly effect.

Right when Zac glanced over the emperor stabbed at Ylvas, but the fractal behind him flared and it suddenly was as though two realities were superimposed. Somehow the emperor was also attacking the large woman at the same time, with the same weapon, breaking the laws of physics.

It was obviously not an even fight, just like Ylvas had feared. Nenothep was perhaps even more powerful than they had anticipated. In the short moment that Zac had used to get inside the shield the large woman had lost her left arm, and the mage was on his knees with blood freely flowing from his side.

Even Ylvas was barely holding on, and wounds kept appearing on him as he desperately tried to maintain the status quo until Zac could kill those who empowered Nenothep. Zac knew that time was running out, and that they might not even last 15 more seconds. The next moment the ground beneath Zac exploded as he pushed toward the hesitant army.

He instantly moved to the thick of it with [Loamwalker], knowing he had to cause as much damage as possible before Nenothep could intervene. He also didn't want to stay in one spot, in case Nenothep chose to discard the lives of his soldiers to attack him while he was inside the mob.

Zac's arm was a blur as the fractal edges shot in five directions. Four of them were completely unimpeded, causing widespread death in the blink of an eye. Blood formed huge pools as bisected corpses fell by the wayside, but Zac knew he had barely made a dent in the Emperor's combat power.

The soldiers that had died were not part of the personal guard, but rather random elite soldiers who helped bolster the shields and the war array. The fifth attack had been launched toward the two generals that stood behind Nenothep, but before it could reach them and the personal guard another shield sprung up, covering them inside.

A frown formed on Zac's face as he rushed toward them, shooting off two more edges in their direction as he ran. The soldiers inside the second shield were clearly the personal guard, and the targets he had to eliminate. The protection wobbled and flickered from the two massive attacks, but it held true. But Zac noted that the soldiers maintaining the shield had paled, and a few were even bleeding from their eyes and ears.

Zac chose the simplest means to try to break it, and he slammed into it with the force of a speeding train, his body imbued with the Dao of Heaviness. Multiple cracks appeared on the barrier, and Zac didn't relent as he swung at the cracks with brutal fervor, each strike containing enough power to kill an E-Grade beast.

It took two seconds of frenzied attacks, but he broke through and squeezed himself inside like a fox in the henhouse. A few of the surviving elite soldiers had tried to impede his progress, but Zac's attacks had made the outer shield completely break. The melee fighters from the Berum resistance had joined the battle by now, desperately fighting the remaining soldiers to stop them from adding their powers to new shields or the War Array.

Fear and hatred shone in the soldiers' eyes as Zac got inside the inner shield, leaving him standing just ten meters away from the personal guard. His aura was completely unleashed, and it actually managed to somewhat destabilize the War array that was still maintained. No one wanted to be the first to attack him since they had all seen what he had done with over a hundred soldiers outside the inner shield.

The status quo only lasted for a second before Zac rushed forward, his axe already growing another fractal edge. The personal guards did everything in their power to keep him away, shooting a wide array of attacks right at him. The salvo consisted mainly of magical attacks, and over ten fireballs slammed right into his body. But Zac only roared and ignored the pain, confident that his enormous Endurance would pull him through.

However, in the next moment he sensed some danger, and he swung out his axe toward the left instead of at the soldiers by sheer instinct. A glowing gauntlet appeared almost as though out of nowhere, and the two collided with enough force that the closest soldiers were thrown away. Some even sporting wounds from the shockwave as they quickly got back on their feet.

The next moment a piercing pain erupted in Zac's side as a dagger was firmly lodged inside and it felt like the wound was both frozen and burned at the same time. It was the two generals who had personally moved to stop him, and both were right at the E-Grade bottleneck judging by their power.

Zac glared at the soldiers who kept imbuing the emperor with power while keeping an eye on him, and he growled in frustration as he turned his attention to the two generals. He tried to grab the dagger-wielding one, but he slunk out of his grasp like an eel, quickly moving out of reach.

The other one also distanced himself as quickly as he could, but that strategy did not come without downsides. They knew they couldn't compete head-on with him, but if they moved away they also exposed their subordinates.

A fractal edge almost instantly grew to over fifteen meters and it skewered almost as many soldiers without Zac even moving the axe. There were less than a hundred members of the personal guard, so a good chunk of them instantly died from that sneak attack.

There was no way to maintain a fractal edge that long, and it disintegrated after Zac managed to kill just a few more of them. But it did cause some chaos in the ranks, making the soldiers unsure whether they should empower their emperor or defend themselves.

Zac wouldn't relent as he pushed forward, but an enormous fist appeared above him, slamming straight down. Not only that, but it also formed an invisible restriction on him in an effort to stop his movement. The fist contained some sort of Restrictive Dao, making the attack resemble [Nature's Punishment] a bit.

A roar escaped from Zac's throat as he swung his axe up to intercept the incoming strike, but as he did he felt another of the stinging wounds erupt in his upper back. If he didn't have his high luck to warn him his heart would have been pierced, but he managed to tilt mid-swing enough so that the wound was mostly superficial.

An idea suddenly appeared in Zac's mind and he stopped his swing mid-motion. Next, he instantly released his Dao Field of Heaviness, making the assassin slightly stumble when he tried to move away. Zac took advantage of that brief window and grabbed him, instantly sealing his fate.

A crunching sound echoed out, and the next moment the enormous fist slammed into Zac, causing the whole mountain to shake. A second later the fist disintegrated, showing a large crater five meters deep. At the bottom was a mangled piece of flesh, crushed beyond recognition.

Next to it was Zac's bloody form, though in far better shape. Zac got up to his feet with a groan and used [Loamwalker] to push out of the pit. He had bet he would be able to endure the attack with his defensive layers, and he had been correct. The next moment the was once again amongst soldiers and the carnage resumed.

The general who was still alive desperately tried to impede him, but he had just spent a huge amount of energy on his final strike, and he no longer had his teammate to share the burden. Zac was like an enraged boar as he swung wildly, and the general only barely survived due to a dozen of the personal guards switching their attention to protect their leader instead of the emperor who was clearly in control of his battle.

But even with the help of the personal guard the general only managed to delay Zac in his goal to kill those who empowered Nenothep. Zac knew that delay might be the difference between winning and losing the war. Over ten seconds had already passed since he entered the shield, and he knew that he was almost out of time.

Energies blazed around him as Zac completely ignored his energy expenditure, aiming to completely and utterly destroy the remaining general. His large gauntlets were already bloody scrap metal from Zac's assault, and he was barely staying on his feet as it was. But his eyes burned with conviction as he glared at Zac.

"Empyrean Sacrifice!" he roared with a hoarse voice, and Zac's senses almost immediately sensed danger.

He tried to move backward, but suddenly it was as though he was stuck inside tar. The remaining 60 soldiers in the personal guard still in fighting condition all had their focus on Zac by now, and they seemed to be cooperating on some array with somber expressions.

An enormous ball of chaotic energies was quickly growing right between himself and the soldiers, and Zac knew he had to get away. Zac's danger-sense only got more and more urgent, and Zac desperately fought to move through the restriction that had been placed on him. His muscles strained as he finally managed to force himself free from the suppression.

But before he had a chance to activate [Loamwalker] the huge ball of energy exploded, turning the whole world white.

Zac barely had time to activate [Nature's Barrier] imbued with the Dao of Trees, followed up by imbuing himself with the Dao of Hardness. He even activated a defensive option of his golden robe to cover him. But even with all that, it felt like he was blasted into pieces when the explosion hit him, and he was thrown away like a ragdoll.

His mind was drifting away as he flew, but Zac barely managed to refocus his mind. As soon as he landed he immediately got himself ready to once again assault the soldiers, ignoring the pathetic state of his body. But the moment he saw the personal guard he knew there would be no need for that.

Almost nothing remained of the whole area where the personal guard once stood, apart from a crater and a few burned remains of bodyparts. One of the few corpses that wasn't completely obliterated sported two mangled gauntlets, indicating that not even the last general had survived the final blast.

Empyrean Sacrifice seemed to have been the final attack of the personal guard, sacrificing their lives to take Nenothep's enemies with them to the grave. And as he looked down at this burned body covered in wounds he knew that perhaps only himself and the two Dominators would be able to survive a blast of that magnitude. He wasn't even sure he would have survived unless he had just gained a huge amount of Endurance down in the caverns.

The personal guard hadn't been the only ones affected by the explosion though. A large number of soldiers from both camps had been too close to the battle and became casualties as well. Even those who had maintained a healthy distance wasn't spared as their bodies were crushed by the shockwave. It was clear that both sides had sustained catastrophic losses.

His body hurt, but at least his first task was done, and the whole personal guard was eradicated. Zac victoriously looked over at the main battle, but his brows rose in alarm when he saw the scene. The situation was even worse than he'd feared. The large woman was lying dead on the ground, and the mage was barely alive from the look of him.

Even Ylvas was in dire straits, drenched in blood and missing a leg. He somehow stood upright with the help of the Cosmic Energy, but his aura was chaotic. If Nenothep hadn't received a backlash from his War Array getting ripped to pieces he might have already killed the Berum champion.

The fight was about to be wrapped up, and Zac didn't even dare to waste a single breath. Torrential amounts of energy gathered in his forearm while he launched a fractal edge at the emperor to buy some time. It was as though Nenothep had eyes in the back of his head, and he immediately swung his spear in a wide arc. The swing disintegrated the fractal edge even though it was imbued with the Dao of Sharpness.

"You actually survived the Empyrean Sacrifice. You truly are a human cockroach. But I do not need a War Array to handle the two of you," Nenothep sneered at the approaching Zac.

Zac didn't bother with an answer, but the space above him suddenly cracked, and a huge wooden hand emerged.