

## The Fall 271

### Chapter 271: Rockmen

Zac surveyed the battlefield as the Ishiate warriors were walking through it, making sure that all the golems were dead as they lay on the scorched ground. Of course, most of the time there was no need to check since the bodies were separated into pieces or completely destroyed from his onslaught. Ogras stood not far from him, holding his hand around the mold where his other arm once was.

"You've gained a lot of power during your hunt," Ogras commented from the side. "And your aura is far denser. It bodes well for our trip to the Towers, especially now that we need to get the protection of some larger force. Go high enough and they might not even care that you're not a Cultivator."

"I could say the same to you. You shouldn't have gained any levels since we fought these things last time, but yet you are a lot stronger. Care to explain how?" Zac responded as he threw a glance over at the demon.

"Well, we all have our means," the demon said with a noncommittal shrug.

"You have somehow broken your restrictions, haven't you?" Zac said keeping his eyes on Ogras face for any changes.

"Sharp as a tack, this one," Ogras said with a snort. "Yes, I got a quest that I managed to complete. So I am no longer bound by the restrictions that afflicted me. However, it still applies to my soldiers. They will have to wait it out or find their own means to release their full potential."

Zac slowly nodded. He already had already guessed as much from the moment they started fighting. The shadow spears of Ogras were almost too many to count as he ripped through the rockman army. The demon had clearly a lot stronger compared to before. The difference in strength between the two had widened between the two compared to the hunt, but Ogras had still exploded with surprising power going by his somewhat limited opportunities.

Ogras didn't mention it, but Zac also guessed that the demon's Dao had also progressed since he'd last seen the demon fight as well since the aura it emitted was quite intense. The presence of the so-called Origin Dao that Brazla explained during the meeting was likely the source of the Demon's improvement.

It gave Zac a better understanding of why so many forces wanted to risk their lives to invade newly integrated planets. The Origin Dao could save people decades of meditation, or even award Dao Seeds for people who were completely hopeless in that regard.

Of course, Zac didn't feel threatened by the Demon's advancements. Ogras had improved surprisingly much, but it was far less compared to his own gains. Ogras had killed less than half as many rockmen compared to Zac, but he had a slew of Progenitor-titles and a second class to bolster his power. If a normal scion of a relatively weak clan could output this much pressure it made him wonder just how strong cultivators from higher-tier planets were.

Besides, Zac had yet to gain the ultimate skills for his two classes. Normally you got two final skills at level 75, each giving you a great boost. So Zac still had a lot of room to grow while at F-Grade, whereas any improvement for Ogras should be quite arduous by now.

“So what do you want to do now?” Ogras finally asked, perhaps to avoid any further questioning about his increased power. “Keep going or head back?”

It was a good question. They had killed a lot of the rockmen, but there were no elites in the group. The leader of the rockmen back when Port Atwood was invaded was noticeably stronger than anyone in this punitive army, meaning that they hadn’t sent the true aces of the incursions to clear out these neighboring towns.

They already knew that those three Incursions that spawned simultaneously outside his town didn’t send the real leaders, but rather a second-in-command. That meant that the big boss of the rockmen should still be alive. Furthermore, the restrictive shackles should have lessened even further by now.

According to the information he had gathered the restrictions usually lasted between 6 to 12 months, and it differed depending on how high-graded the planet was. The higher grade of the newly integrated planet the quicker the restrictions would be lifted so that the trial for the natives was tough enough.

Since Earth had become a D-Grade planet right off the bat the restrictions should be on the shorter side of the spectrum. Unfortunately, Zac had no idea exactly when it would happen, which is why he wanted to attack the incursions as quickly as possible. He wanted to fight the invaders before they gained another power-up.

Zac opened his mouth to answer, but before he had the chance to speak the sounds of hurried footsteps interrupted him. They both turned around to see a male Ishiate walk over, accompanied by the woman they had spoken to up at the wooden rampant.

Zac already knew that he was the lord, or rather leader of the hunt, of this town, and his wife was something like a druid or nature priestess. What surprised Zac though was that he saw the Ishiate wear a fitted armor set made out of chitin-shells that wear clearly from the Ayr ants.

Calrin had really worked quickly.

“Lord Atwood, Lord Azh’Rezak,” the Ishiate said with a bow. “I am Steelwood. My family and Everwood Refuge is ever in your debt. If there is anything we can do in return please let us know.”

“I see you’re wearing the local produce of Port Atwood,” Zac answered with a smile. “Allowing the opening of a branch of the Thayer Consortia is all we ask in return.”

“We would also be grateful if you helped us make some inroads with your Ishiate allies,” Ogras quickly added. “You have seen the strength of our gear, and our supply is huge. Allowing us to open more stores would save a lot of lives and allow you to grow stronger more quickly.”

The two Ishiate gave each other a quick glance, but they soon nodded.

“What you say is true. The items the blue one showed us were far superior to the items we brought from our old world, though they were a bit expensive. But one cannot put a price on life. We will speak with our allies about your trading venture,” Steelwood said. “Though you should know that the Ishiate hero Starlight does also control a business.”

A burst of killing intent seeped out of Ogras, but he quickly quenched it after a glare from Zac. The fact that Starlight had somehow got his hands on a business venture was both surprising and unfortunate. It would impact their spread on Earth to a certain degree.

Of course, their main target was the human towns since they were far more numerous than the Ishiate. The beastmen were the second least populous species, only beating out the molemen in the underworld, and there were at least twenty times more humans on the new planet based on estimations.

"That is fine, we will not force anyone. Our wares speak for themselves," Zac said. "More importantly, is your teleporter still public?"

"No," Steelwood said with a shake of his head. "The moment we saw your combat prowess I closed it. I learned a bit about those that are called the Dominators during the hunt, and I feared having it open for too long."

Zac initiated the system to set up an alliance with Steelwood, and he quickly accepted the prompt.

"Please set Port Atwood to trusted. My army is standing by," Zac said. "Since I am already here I will close the Incursion."

"It will take at least a day, probably two," Ogras said from the side, showing a far calmer response to the proclamation compared to the two Ishiate.

Their eyes widened in disbelief and mutely stared at Zac until the female spoke up.

"Lord Atwood," she hesitantly said. "closing the incursion is easier said than done. They have set up a very strong protective array. Our scouts have also found that thousands of large boulders are flouting about the core area. We believe they might be a defensive measure as well."

"Don't worry," Zac said unfazed. "If you want you can join us, but if you want to stay behind it's fine as well."

Steelwood slowly nodded his head.

"I will accompany you, I've raided their incursion many times and know the paths," he said, placing a hand on his wife's arm.

Not long after the Valkyries and the demon army started streaming out of the teleporter, immediately securing the vicinity. When they saw that there was no threat Joanna quickly walked over to Zac and bowed.

"Lord Atwood," she said. "We were afraid something happened when the teleporter closed."

"Just a safety precaution," Zac said. "You guys haven't slacked off."

It was true. His eyes couldn't help widen in surprise as he glanced over the Valkyries with [Inquisitive Eye]. All of them were past level 35, and many were even in the early 40's. Joanna was the strongest, having reached level 44.

It was far from enough to reach the ladder after the hunt, but it was extremely impressive considering how far behind they had been when he picked them up.

"It is thanks to the resources and hunting grounds you provide," Joanna nodded. "After we got strong enough to venture into the forests alone our leveling speed exploded. The Barghest have grown in numbers, and it's almost impossible for us to run out of things to kill."

"That's true. However, shouldn't your gain be a bit limited now when you've passed level 40?" Zac asked.

"Some of us are also hunting in squads on Mystic Island. We can only hunt in the outer rim though, where the beasts are only around level 60. But it gives far more Cosmic Energy, and the battle experience is valuable as well," Joanna agreed.

"Keep up the good work. The Incursion here is those rockmen who invaded us before. The Valkyries will join us, but be careful. These ones are pretty tough," Zac said.

Joanna seemed to ready to argue, but Zac held up his hand.

"I have a gift for the Valkyries. During the hunt I got my hands on a few War Arrays. After you've learned those you will be a truly elite force. But until then you still need to be careful," he said.

"You've finally got one?" she said with excitement.

"I also have another gift for you," Zac said as he took out Nenothep's spear. "This thing belonged to a crazy strong guy in the hunt, and it should be a real Spirit Tool. You were the first Valkyrie to join me and your level is proof of your effort. I hope it will help you keep pushing forward."

Joanna mutely stared at the spear that Zac placed in her hand with wide eyes, looking completely frozen. Zac smiled at her before he turned toward Ilvere who was leading the Demon army.

"We set out immediately. You'll stay in charge of the two armies," Zac said

"No problem. I was getting bored from sitting around on the island," the large demon said as he cracked his neck with some excitement glimmering in his eyes. "These girls need some experience as well. A real warrior is not born by fighting some dumb animals."

Zac briefly considered waiting for the Marshall Clan to catch up, but in the end he decided against it. Closing an incursion gave a huge boost in power and wealth, and he wanted that boost to stay within his force.

Calrin had no desire to head to the incursion since there were no profits for him to be made there, so he headed back to Port Atwood. But Zac asked him to try and get his hand on language crystals that could help him read the scripts of the Undead Empire.

His language skill did not work on written texts, but it wasn't hard to read learn to read with the help of crystals. The good ones worked just like a skill crystal, and imprinted the knowledge without the need of arduous cramming sessions.

Everything was settled, and they they left Everwood Refuge with Steelwood leading the way. In just ten minutes his army was speeding through the forests, heading in the direction of a group of mountains in the distance. The rockmen had, not surprisingly, chosen a mountain as their stronghold.

It was a pain in the ass since it would give them a topological advantage, but Zac wasn't overly worried. Everything he knew about this invasion was that they weren't from a too strong a force. The leader of their invasion force was nowhere as strong as the Corpse Lord, and they were essentially used as cannon fodder by the two stronger forces.

But while he wasn't worried for himself he did worry for his soldiers. He had seen the carnage from a large-scale battle just a few days ago. The casualties had been staggering on both the sides of Berum and Medhin, and that was even though they were the elites of their respective worlds.

It took them six hours to reach their destination, allowing Zac and Ogras to restore their reserves of energy. But even then they stopped to make sure everyone was in peak condition before they let started the fight. Due to great vantage of the rockman base, a surprise blitz was already not an option, so they needed to fight the invaders head-on.

A large fort stood erect in the distance, with a grey shield enveloping it. Above the wall walk, hundreds of large boulders floated, likely ready to be launched at any incoming force. It reminded Zac of what Ogras told him a long time ago. Attacking a town was suicide unless you possessed superior force.

"I wish that brute was here now," Ogras muttered as he looked at the shield and the fortress in the distance.

Zac agreed that it would be nice to have Billy here. But he couldn't always throw Billy to the front, risking his life to gain easier access. He knew that he would have to be the one to take the lead this time. Soon they stood just a kilometer away from the rockmen's shield, and the wall was filled with black stoic shapes.

"I'll try to break open the shield. Can you help destroy as many of the stones as possible?" Zac said to Ogras.

"No problem," Ogras said with a shrug.